



NEW INSIGHTS INTO THE STUDY OF ENGLISH FALSE FRIENDS:  
THEIR USE AND UNDERSTANDING BY SPANISH LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

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Universidade de Santiago de Compostela  
Facultade de Filoloxía  
Departamento de Filoloxía Inglesa e Alemá



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Doctoral thesis submitted by M<sup>a</sup> Luisa Roca Varela  
Supervised by Ignacio Palacios

Opta ao título de Doutor Europeo  
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V<sup>o</sup> prace do director

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## ABBREVIATIONS

**Adj.:** Adjective

**Adv.:** Adverb

**AL:** Advanced Learners

**AWL:** Academic Word List

**CCVF:** Clasificación de Cognados Verdaderos y Falsos (Classification of True and False Cognates)

**CEFR:** Common European Framework of Reference

**CREA:** Corpus de Referencia del Español Actual (Reference Corpus for Present-Day Spanish)

**FF:** False Friends

**GSL:** General Service List

**ICLE:** International Corpus of Learner English

**IL:** Intermediate Level

**IPA:** International Phonetic Alphabet

**K1:** Headword in the Top 1,000 Most Frequent Words in the General Service List

**K2:** Headword in the Top 2,000 Most Frequent Words in the General Service List

**L1:** First Language or Mother Tongue

**L2:** Second Language or Foreign Language

**LINDSEI:** Louvain International Database of Spoken English Interlanguage

**lit.:** literally

**LODCE:** Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English

**LOE:** Ley Orgánica de Educación (Spanish Law of Education)

**N.:** Noun

**OED:** Oxford English Dictionary

**PASW:** Predictive Analytics Software

**pp.:** Page/s

**RAE:** Diccionario de la Real Academia de la Lengua Española (Dictionary of the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language)

**S1:** Headword in the Top 1,000 Most Frequent Words in Spoken English

**S2:** Headword in the Top 2,000 Most Frequent Words in Spoken English

**S3:** Headword in the Top 3,000 Most Frequent Words in Spoken English

**SP:** Spoken Production

**SPSS:** Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

**SSEFL:** Spanish Students of English as a Foreign Language

**SULEC:** Santiago University Learner of English Corpus

**USC:** University of Santiago de Compostela

**Vb.:** Verb

**W1:** Headword in the Top 1,000 Most Frequent Words in Written English

**W2:** Headword in the Top 2,000 Most Frequent Words in Written English

**W3:** Headword in the Top 3,000 Most Frequent Words in Written English

**WP:** Written Production

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# GENERAL INTRODUCTION

## 0.1. General Introduction

Lexis has been long disregarded by language teachers in traditional English classrooms. However, in the last decades of the 20th century, linguists and researchers started to show a growing interest in the role of lexical acquisition in language teaching which lasts up to the present (Nation, 1990; Lewis, 1993; Ellis, 1994; Singleton, 1999; Schmitt, 2000; Bogaards and Laufer, 2004). In fact, vocabulary is now considered a central issue which allows language learners to be effective and accurate in the communication process. The present study acknowledges the prominent role of word knowledge while analysing the productive and receptive use of English *false friends* by Spanish learners of English.

There exist noticeable lexical similarities between English and Spanish (mostly due to the influence of Latin and French on English). However, the formal resemblance between both languages does not unequivocally imply semantic equivalence. As a matter of fact, similar words between these two different languages can be said to be a double-edged weapon; they can either have a facilitating effect or be an obstacle to language learners (Carroll, 1992). Lexical similarities assist the learning process when the outward resemblance is an indication of the meaning correspondence in both languages (English *electric* and Spanish *eléctrico*); on the contrary, word similarities are a hindrance to language learners when L2 items, which are spelt or pronounced similarly to L1 words, do not have the same meaning (English *agenda* and Spanish *agenda*). That is what happens to *false friends*. False friends are words in different languages that resemble each other but have different meanings (Chalker and Weiner, 1996; O'Neill and Casanovas, 1997; Colman, 2009). The problem that arises here is that the influence of the L1 leads language learners to wrongly assume that similar words between languages share the same meanings, thus falling into the lexical trap of *false friends*. At first glance, it appears that a lack of knowledge concerning these lexical items might affect crosslinguistic (interpersonal) communication and might lead to important misunderstandings between learners of English and native speakers. Students who are not aware of false friends might not succeed in making themselves understood and might fail to interpret certain English messages containing these words. The present

dissertation intends to test these assumptions; this piece of research tries to identify the main problems brought about by the existence of English false friends in the learners' general understanding and use of English. The underlying line of reasoning that guides this study is that English false friends might lead Spanish learners to communicate some meanings that they do not intend to and might misinterpret some English messages which contain these misleading terms. Thus, it should not be surprising that Spanish learners may misunderstand English phrases, such as *follow diversion*, *insane child molester* or *rich suburbs* due to the presence of English false friends, such as *diversion*, *insane* or *suburbs*. These words are similar to Spanish *diversión*, *insane* and *suburbios* which have a completely different meaning. In terms of L2 production, Spanish learners might misuse false friends unconsciously and say things like *I am constipated*, *She is an insane girl* or *I like molesting my little sister*. In this respect, one of the main problems that false friends might produce is that "the average English native speaker [c]ould misunderstand [...] and never consider that the [L2] speaker had chosen the incorrect lexical item" (Gass and Selinker, 2008: 450). Consequently, English people would interpret the learners' messages literally ignoring the mistakes, and this would change the real communicative intention of the learner (for instance, by *insane*, the learner may mean unhealthy, not crazy). Therefore, the utterances above might cause an unexpected effect on native speakers of English who would probably get a different message from the one that learners are trying to convey. On the basis of these arguments, this dissertation aims at determining the students' use and interpretation of English false friends with a view to detecting, preventing and solving any problems regarding this particular set of words. The learners' knowledge of and about false friends, together with the students' needs and difficulties, will be identified thanks to the data provided by three already-made learner corpora and by a specifically-designed questionnaire. The observations made in this dissertation intend to serve teaching and may shed further light on the language learning process. In relation to this, this work tries to identify those false friends which are especially difficult for Spanish learners and help students become aware of the fact that "lexical similarities across languages does not necessarily entail a correlation of meaning" (Al-Wahy, 2009:105) and that misinterpretations and problems in production might arise from their lack of knowledge in this particular area.

In terms of the general structure and organisation of this work, this dissertation consists of a theoretical part and two practical studies. After explaining the motivations, the focus of the present research, and some important theoretical notions (terms,

definition, classifications and studies in the literature of the topic), the practical part will be introduced and duly explained. This practical part explains the foundations and the reasons behind the two different studies included in this dissertation in more detail. Broadly speaking, the first study is concerned with the identification of the difficulties students have with *English false friends* and their frequency of occurrence in learner language through the analysis of three different learner corpora. The second study looks into the receptive side of the problem and aims at identifying the problems Spanish students have in the understanding of English *false friends*. After dealing with these two studies, the final part provides a general summary of the conclusions drawn from this investigation, along with some suggestions for further research.

## **0.2. Introducing False Friends: Key Aspects**

False friends (FF, henceforth) have been alleged to constitute a problematic area in L2 learning processes (Frantzen, 1998; Chacón Beltrán, 2006). This section provides a basic context for the research that will be presented on the following pages and tries to set the research problem that needs to be addressed. The main aim here is to discuss the origin of false friends between languages, their importance and relationship with two key competences for language learning, in particular with the lexical and communicative competences, and the possible factors accounting for the complexity of false friends.

### *0.2.1. Brief Notes on the Origin of False Friends*

A diachronic study of different false friends between languages suggests that most of these words are etymologically related terms which share a common source. As a matter of fact, a large number of false friends go back to the same origin, that is, they are *cognate words* (Van Roey, 1985; Crystal, 1994); they come from the same root.<sup>1</sup> Thus the differences in meaning between similar words in different languages are likely to be the result of diverging evolutionary paths. However, there is a group of false friends composed by word pairs which do not share a common source, they look alike just by chance. In fact, some false friends are the result of a mere morphological coincidence

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<sup>1</sup>Many false friends have their origin in a common Greco or Latin word-stock shared by the two languages under analysis.



between languages (Portuguese *chumbo* vs. Spanish *chumbo*, English *soap* vs. Spanish *sopa*). This group of false friends are known in the literature as “chance pairs.” Nonetheless, a great majority of false friends between languages belong to the first group, that is, they have a common ancestor and diverge in meaning as a result of certain semantic changes occurring in the historical development of these words in two different languages across time. According to this, the semantic differences between these words might be well explained through the theories of linguistic change. These closely related terms have evolved separately and differently in their respective languages and contexts over time. On occasions, one member of the pair has shifted its meaning/s totally (English *success* vs. Spanish *suceso*); sometimes, it has extended its original sense, through different mechanisms, such as metaphor, semantic restriction or amplification, metonymy, euphemism, dysphemism, synecdoche, amelioration or pejoration (Chamizo Domínguez and Nerlich, 2002). Two interesting cases of false friends resulting from metaphorical amplification and semantic amelioration are illustrated by Spanish *canguro* and English *kangaroo*, and English *barbarous* and Spanish *bárbaro*, respectively (Chamizo Domínguez, 2006: 426-427). As regards the first pair of words, Spanish *canguro* and English *kangaroo* refer to the typically-Australian animal which carries its baby in a pouch; apart from that, the Spanish noun has also developed the metaphorical meaning of “babysitter,” which is not present in English, thus, becoming false friends between the two languages. Concerning the adjectives *barbarous* and *bárbaro*, they both mean “cruel” in English and Spanish; moreover, the Spanish adjective has undergone a process of semantic amelioration in its historical evolution and now it can also be used to mean “fantastic.” This meaning is not expressed by the English adjective. Thus, there is a semantic asymmetry between English and Spanish which turns these words into false friends.

Regardless of the origin of these word pairs, an important issue is that false friends in principle might affect the learners’ lexical and communicative competences in English. The next section intends to establish a clear relationship between false friends and the concepts of lexical and communicative competence.

#### *0.2.2. Lexical Competence, Communicative Competence and False Friends*

The problem of false friends can be clearly linked to the concepts of lexical competence and communicative competence. The lexical component of a language (which also

includes knowledge of false friends) should be considered as a basic element in the development of communicative competence (Widdowson, 1978; Krashen and Terrel, 1983; Ellis, 1994), as well as an essential part of language teaching. A limited vocabulary, together with the production of lexical mistakes, may be disruptive and may hinder communication (Gass and Selinker, 2008). Thus, the existence of vocabulary errors, and by extension, mistakes involving false friends, must be seen as an important “communication distracting agent” (Agustín Llach, 2005:46) which may have a rather negative effect on accuracy and on message understanding (Hughes and Lascaratou, 1982).

It is also remarkable that there are some false friends among the most high-frequency English words; this means that there is a strong likelihood for learners to find these words when reading or listening to native English speakers. For this reason, it is necessary to examine the impact of these words on the students’ productive use and understanding of English and to look into whether some of these false friends “may have disastrous consequences” (Hatch and Brown, 1995: 128) in the communication process between native speakers and learners of English. Thus this dissertation intends to look into the learners’ use and interpretation of some key false friends with a view to assessing the influence of these words on the learners’ communicative goal. But before defining the scope of this study, I bring forward some of the potential factors that make these words difficult for learners to use and interpret as well as some of the reasons why these words appear to be so misleading and bring important challenges to learners.

### *0.2.3. The Intricacies of False Friends: False Friends as Complex Words*

Research on vocabulary has shown that some lexical items are more difficult to learn and use than others (Lado, 1957; Laufer, 1997; Frantzen, 1998); false friends are frequently included in the group of difficult words. Frantzen (1998) discusses the key aspects contributing to the intricacy of false friends. She identifies ten major factors which explain why these lexical items are difficult to learn. She contends that there are both intrinsic properties and extrinsic circumstances affecting this phenomenon which make false friends hard for language learners. In particular, the unpredictability of the phenomenon, certain teaching practices (e.g. oversimplification, incorrect input) and the contextual ambiguity that surrounds some of these words are claimed to play a role in the complexity of false friends.

As regards the unpredictability of the phenomenon, Frantzen (1998) very well points out that the existence of two different semantic relations in false friends (total false friends: *actual/actual* vs. partial false friends: *argument/argument*) confuses learners who do not really know when similar words are completely different in meaning and when they have partially or totally the same meaning. Furthermore, there is no consistent relationship between some words in a particular word class and their counterparts in another word class (the nouns *suceso-success* show no connection in meaning; however, the verbs *succeed* and *suceder* are partial false friends since they both may refer to the idea of “follow, come after someone” in both English and Spanish). In addition to this, the fact that many false friends occur in related content areas (e.g. schooling: *college/colegio*, *lecture/lectura*; health issues: *insano/insane*, *constipated/constipado*, language: *idiom/idioma*; family relations: *parents/parientes*) does not give clear clues on the semantic distinction between the members of some FF pairs. Another intralinguistic factor which adds further complexity to the issue is the existence of several similar looking words (e.g. *costumbre-costume/custom*), some of which are true synonyms (*costumbre-custom*) and some of which are false friends (*costumbre-costume*).

Apart from these intrinsic factors, there are several extrinsic variables having to do with some pedagogical tendencies and practical issues in language teaching which are not favourable for a correct understanding and use of false friends. The teachers’ tendency to oversimplification, their emphasis on cognates (Nation, 1990; Ellis, 1994) and even the teachers’ lack of knowledge in this particular area may reinforce the incorrect use of false friends. Furthermore, teachers tend to put special emphasis on the significance of context in vocabulary learning; however, contexts do not always help learners solve problems with false friends since “the contexts in which false friends occur can sometimes be ambiguous enough to ‘accept’ both the real and the apparent-but false one” (Frantzen, 1998:250). A sentence such as *Actually, I think it is a good idea* illustrates this problem; there is nothing obvious that tells students to discard the meaning of “now, at the present” for English *actually*. Moreover, reference tools, such as dictionaries, do not provide sufficient information about these words’ use and the infrequency of particular senses; additionally, the media sometimes spread particular word uses (Hjarvard, 2004) which may deviate from the standard use of false friends thus strengthening the misuse of these lexical items. Finally, there are issues connected with dialectal variation (Hayward and Moulin, 1984) and situations of language contact

within a country (Lipski, 2008), which may have an influence on the teaching and learning of false friends. Thus, some words are false friends in particular variants, and not in others. In the Spanish variety used in Spain, the verb *aplicar* cannot be used in the sense of applying for a job, while this sense is completely acceptable in Latin America. In connection with this, intragroup language contact, that is, the constant contact of two different languages within the same group may affect the deceptive nature of some false friends. Accordingly, the Spanish word *carpeta* meaning “folder” in standard Spanish is found to be used for *rug* in the Spanish of Puerto Rico. There also exists the extended version *vacunar la carpeta* which is considered as an example of codeswitching (cf López Morales, 2004).

In addition to all these factors, there seem to be remarkable cognitive constraints involved in the learning of false friends. Formal overlap between two languages automatically activates the meaning of the learners’ first language (Meara 1984; Holmes and Ramos, 1993; Kirsner et al., 1993; Grosjean, 2001; Comesaña et al., 2010); these cross-language interactions constitute an important drawback in the case of false friends because despite the similarity in the outward look of these words, their inward meaning is not the same. In consequence, as Bijsterveld puts it simply: “the connections between the orthography and the semantics [of these words] have to be rearranged” (2010: 35) thus implying a greater effort on the learners’ part. After analysing the major factors shedding some more light on the complexity of false friends, the next section intends to delimit the scope of this dissertation.

### **0.3. Scope of the Study**

As suggested, a formal and informal observation of the students’ interlanguage seems to suggest that Spanish learners tend to misuse and even misinterpret English false friends (Prado, 1989; Durán Escribano, 2004; Chamizo Domínguez, 2008). However, a number of gaps might be identified in the literature of false friends. Most studies tend to provide descriptions of prototypical false friends which typically occur in EFL contexts rather than make a thorough examination of the occurrence, use and interpretation of these words in learner language. This means that very few studies have been concerned with the real difficulties learners have in the use and understanding of false friends. It is also surprising that the study of some false friends is prioritised over others responding to dubious criteria. Besides, few authors resorted to real data of language use and to the

analysis of corpora for the analysis of false friends with the exception of some pioneering studies (Granger, 1996; Palacios and Alonso 2005). In addition, up to now, nobody to my knowledge has examined the use of these words in the spoken performance of Spanish learners of English.

This study aims at filling some of these gaps in the literature of false friends by providing a thorough examination of 100 false friends between British English and European Spanish. The selected items are registered as false friends in the academic world and are ranked as high-frequency terms in renowned word lists, such as the *Longman Communication 3000* word list and Adam Kilgarriff's word list based on the *BNC*. The fact that these lexical items are high-frequency English words makes them important in language teaching and learning since they are recurrently used in English and they might be the source of undesirable misunderstandings between native and non-native speakers; and, this should be avoided by language teachers and practitioners.

Apart from that, the present dissertation looks into the learners' use and interpretation of false friends with a view to determining the real extent of the problem. Thus, it aims at confirming whether learners have problems with false friends that they need to overcome or not. In the event that false friends are shown to pose obstacles for EFL learners, I will look into the type of problems learners have from two different perspectives. On the one hand, I will try to identify how false friends affect L2 performance by analysing their written and spoken production. In order to obtain empirical evidence for this study, three learner corpora, the *Santiago University Learner of English Corpus* (SULEC), the *International Corpus of Learner English* (ICLE) and *Louvain International Database of Spoken English Interlanguage* (LINDSEI) will be used. On the other hand, I will examine the students' understanding of false friends (L2 competence) through a number of tasks that I will present in the form of a questionnaire. These three databases and the questionnaire will provide me with the necessary data to identify the main problematic areas that teachers and learners need to work on. In this regard, it is necessary to point out that this study is conceived as a contribution to the understanding and improvement of language teaching and learning regarding this area of English vocabulary. Setting the boundaries of this problem will allow teachers to be ready to prevent it in learners' speech and writing, and to stop it effectively in order to avoid a constant misinterpretation and misuse of these words through the different stages of language learning. The following section intends to set the general aims of this dissertation clearly.

### *0.3.1. Research Questions*

As mentioned above, the general aim of this dissertation is to examine what learners know of and about false friends. I will first explore the use of false friends in the output of Spanish learners as represented in three learner corpora with a view to identifying the students' use of these words (Study I: corpus-based survey); and I will then analyse the receptive side of the problem by looking into the students' understanding of false friends through different activities in a questionnaire (Study II: questionnaire-based survey).

The corpus-based analysis presented in Study I, chapter 3, examines the learners' use of false friends in productive processes (writing and speaking) on the basis of the data provided by the aforementioned corpora. The focus of this research is on the students' knowledge of 100 false friends and it aims at identifying the lacks and needs concerning these lexical items through an analysis of their interlanguage. The main research questions addressed in the first study are the following:

- Do Spanish learners have real problems with English false friends? Are learners using or misusing false friends in their production? In the event false friends are difficult for learners, what type of false friends (total, partial or contextual false friends) are the hardest ones for learners?
- How often do students resort to false friends and what is the proportion of accurate and inaccurate uses of these words? Are there any visible problems in the linguistic contexts surrounding false friends (wrong word combinations: collocations, colligations, etc)?
- What are the reasons for the misuse of these lexical items? How could we avoid problems with false friends?
- Are problems with false friends affecting accuracy or other than that? Are there false friends which affect communication more negatively than others? Could false friends bring about real misunderstandings or communication breakdowns in L2 production?
- Are there any implications for language teaching?

In a few words, the overall aim of the first study in chapter 3 is to examine the learners' use of some English high-frequency FF in productive processes in order to determine the relevance of those lexical items, the students' needs regarding these lexical items and their impact on communication. In order to put a balance in this dissertation, the

second study presented in chapter 4 looks at the receptive side of the problem and explores the difficulties English false friends may pose for L2 comprehension. This second survey uses a questionnaire as a research instrument in order to find evidence for the students' understanding of false friends and for the students' ability of interpreting the meaning of unknown false friends in a linguistic context, in a situational context or in the context of a text. The activities proposed in the questionnaire aim at responding to the following research questions:

- Do students recognise false friends when they come across them in reception? How well do Spanish students know and interpret English false friends? Are false friends processed through L1 similar words? Does the L1 have an impact on the interpretation of English words? What type of false friends are the most problematic ones in terms of interpretation?
- Do EFL learners identify false friends when they find them in isolation as individual words (*collar*, *lecture*, etc) in a decontextualised setting or, do false friends pass unnoticed for students?
- How well are students acquainted with the semantic properties (meanings), paradigmatic and syntagmatic features (collocations) of certain false friends? Do they know particular word combinations and collocations of these English words?
- Do students choose the right word in a clear linguistic co-text<sup>2</sup> and context when they are confronted with a pair of false friends (e.g. *Her last book was a big... success/exit*)?
- Does a situational context<sup>3</sup> (e.g. road signs, product labels, advertisements) help students guess and comprehend the sense of certain false friends in particular situations (e.g. *diversion*, *preservatives*, *motorist*)?
- Are false friends easier to interpret when they are embedded in the context of a text? Do texts lead to a better understanding of English false friends? Might the presence of several false friends hinder the interpretation of a whole text?

Apart from scrutinising the learners' interpretation of false friends, the second study sets out to supply information about the learners' awareness of this linguistic phenomenon as well as their attitudes towards these words. For this reason, different questions which

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<sup>2</sup> Co-text: "a term used by British linguists in an attempt to resolve the ambiguity of the term context, which can refer to both linguistic and situational environments. The practice is to reserve "co-text" for the former, and "context" for the latter (Crystal, 1991: 87).

<sup>3</sup> In its broad sense, "situational context includes the total non-linguistic background to a text or utterance, including the immediate situation in which it is used" (Crystal, 1991: 79).

seek out to examine the students' interest in learning these words and the teachers' attention to them have been included. Among other things, the questionnaire intends to reply to the following research queries:

- Are Spanish learners acquainted with the linguistic metaphor of “false friends”? Do learners know what it refers to?
- Are learners interested and motivated to learn these lexical items? Do learners think that they are fascinating, noteworthy, unusual or peculiar words?
- Do Spanish students of English think that it is important to study false friends in the English class?
- In the learners' opinion, what are the techniques both teachers and students use most to study false friends in the classroom?
- What problems do students acknowledge having with these lexical items in reception and production?

To put it succinctly, this second study examines the learners' difficulties in the interpretation of English attributable to the presence of false friends. It also explores the learners' awareness of the phenomenon and it registers the learners' views on the relevance of these words in EFL settings.

In general, this dissertation adopts a learner-centred methodology. It focuses on the analysis of the learners' use of English false friends, on their receptive knowledge of these English words, and on their difficulties and needs concerning this challenging area. The findings of both studies might possibly help teachers anticipate, prevent and avoid the learners' problems with high-frequency false friends and provide students with the main clues to use these lexical items correctly.









# CHAPTER I.

## FALSE FRIENDS: TERMINOLOGICAL REVIEW, DEFINITION AND CLASSIFICATION

### 1.1. A Terminological Review of the Notion of “False Friends”

The English phrase *false friends*<sup>4</sup> is a calque from French *faux amis*. This metaphor was first introduced by Koessler and Derocquigny in 1928 and is now widely accepted and recurrently found across many different languages (e.g. *falsi amici* in Italian, *Falsche Freunde* in German, *falsos amigos* in Spanish). Apart from this metaphorical expression, some other labels have been proposed in the literature of this interlinguistic phenomenon. In the English tradition, we find terms such as “deceptive cognates” (Lado, 1957; O’Neill and Casanovas, 1997; Batchelor and Offord, 2000), “deceptive demons” (Reid, 1968), “misleading cognates” (Taylor, 1976), “homographic non cognates” (Gerard and Scarborough, 1989), “deceptively transparent words” (Laufer, 1989), “false cognates” (Grainger, 1993; French and Ohnesorge, 1997; Brysbaert, 1998; Dijkstra *et al.*, 1998; Pál, 2000), “pseudocognates” (de Groot and Comijs 1995), “false equivalents” (Buncic, 2000), or “interlingual/interlexical homographs” (De Groot and Kroll, 1997; Smith, 1997; Elston-Güttler *et al.*, 2006; Conklin, 2005). Of all these labels, the phrases *false friends* and *false cognates* are the most frequently used. In fact, most studies use both expressions interchangeably as synonyms without making any further distinction between them. However, these terms point in different directions. Differences between both phrases have been already mentioned by some other scholars, such as Leontaridi, Peramos Soler and Ruiz Morales (2007: 79),<sup>5</sup> by Moss (1992: 142) or by Chamizo Domínguez (2008: 2-3). A linguistic analysis of the noun phrase *false cognate/s* gives us the clues to understand the nature of what we are dealing with when talking about *false cognates*. This expression has the noun *cognate/s* as its head, *cognates* are words in two different languages that have a common historical linguistic

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<sup>4</sup> This metaphorical expression may sound politically incorrect since it points at the hostility between lexical items of two different languages. However, this term has a positive side: firstly, it is widely used in the teaching-learning community and, secondly, it is also quite didactic as it informs learners about the deceptive transparency of these words.

<sup>5</sup> This study deals with Spanish and Modern Greek false friends.

origin (Van Roey, 1985; Chacón Beltrán, 2006; Matthews, 2007). For instance, Spanish *verbo* and English *verb* would be an example of cognate words since both items derive from Latin *verbum*. However, the noun *cognate/s* is accompanied and modified by the adjective *false*, which subverts and changes the meaning of the noun completely. Thus, the whole phrase *false cognates* would refer to words which “seem to be” (as expressed by the adjective *false*) cognates, that is, which “appear” to share the same etymology but they do not actually go back to the same root. Strictly speaking, *false cognates* would be then similar words in different languages whose formal resemblance is the result of a mere coincidence. An example of *false cognates* would be the noun *pan* which is identical in Spanish and English and there is no etymological reason behind this similarity; in addition to this, their meanings are completely different, Spanish *pan* (<Latin *panus*) means “bread” and English *pan* (<Old English *panne*, of West Germanic origin) “cooking pot.” Following this line of argument, interlingual homographs<sup>6</sup> such as English *actual* and Spanish *actual* could *not* be included in the group of *false cognates* owing to one main reason: they share the same etymology, they go back to Latin *actualis*. This means that although the term *false friends* does not sound scientific, it is more accurate than the previous one; this expression is broader or more comprehensive than that of *false cognate*. In Chamizo Domínguez’s words, “false cognates would be a hyponym of false friends” (2008:3). *False friends* would then cover two groups of word pairs: etymological-related pairs of words, that is, L1 and L2 similar words which come from a common source but have developed different meanings in their adaptation to particular contexts (English *actual* and Spanish *actual* or English *remove* and Spanish *remover*) and coincidental or chance false friends, which, strictly speaking, would be termed as *false cognates*,<sup>7</sup> that is, words whose formal similarity in both languages is attributable to pure coincidence (e.g: Spanish *pan* “bread” and English *pan* “cooking pot,” English *pie* and Spanish *pie* or English *to have* and Spanish *haber*).

In the present dissertation, the term *false friend(s)* is preferred and it would be used to refer to L1 and L2 words which share two main traits: formal similarity and semantic divergence. Therefore, the present dissertation **includes** not only *etymologically-related word pairs*, but also *coincidentally similar items* which exhibit

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<sup>6</sup> Interlingual homographs are words in different languages which share the same orthographic form (Dijkstra, Grainger and van Heuven, 1999: 497)

<sup>7</sup> Words which appear to derive from a common ancestor and, look or sound similar due to mere coincidence

formal resemblance in English and Spanish, but which hold total, partial or stylistic semantic differences.

## **1.2. Towards a Definition of the Term**

False friends have been the object of a wide range of studies which have given way to many different definitions. My aim here is to delimit and provide an effective description of this interlinguistic phenomenon. A general and simple definition of false friends has been provided by Chalker and Weiner who say that a *false friend* is “a word that has the same or a similar form in two (or more) languages but different meanings in each” (1996: 149). Although this definition can be taken as a starting point, it is quite broad. Thus it is important to come out with definitions which tackle this phenomenon more in depth and from different perspectives. To start with, the *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* suggests that false friends exist especially in the context of language learning and defines a false friend as “a word in a foreign language which looks or sounds similar to a word in your own language but does not have exactly the same meaning” (CIDE 1995: 502). This definition is relevant since it takes the problem to the field of second language acquisition. Moreover, it expands the concept of formal similarity to orthography and phonology when using the verbs “looks” and “sounds.” This very same idea is explicitly conveyed in a more recent definition by Chamizo Domínguez who refers to false friends as “two given words which are similar or equivalent graphically or phonetically in two or more given languages but have different meanings” (Chamizo Domínguez, 2006:426). Therefore, similar forms must be understood as both similar looking and similar sounding words, that is, the resemblance may occur in speech and/or writing. Still, none of these definitions mentions the semantic features of false friends. Most authors state that false friends have different meanings in different languages. But what do they mean by “having different meanings”? Definitions seem to suggest that the semantic differences in false friends are in the denotative or referential meaning, but there are some false friends which are slightly different in their “associative meaning” (Leech, 1974: 20), that is, in their register, style, frequency and/or geographical distribution. In this respect, Zethsen refers to the different aspects, nuances of word meaning, and use which should be taken into account when analysing this phenomenon:

The phenomenon of “false friend” is not merely a question of two formally identical words having completely different meanings, but one that can operate at more subtle levels too. Divergences at the level of formality, frequency, inferences etc. show how important it is for the translator to know about the cultural, textual and terminological habits of the target language” (2004:139)

Accordingly, a more detailed and complex definition of false friends should take into account that formal similarities in false friends can be orthographic, phonetic or ortho-phonetic (both in pronunciation and spelling) and that false friends can exhibit either total or partial differences in meaning and other differences in the words’ usage (formality, style, etc). Therefore, a more precise definition of false friends would state that false friends are identical or similar (*graphic/phonetic/ortho-phonetic*) words in different languages whose meanings, contexts of occurrence and/or connotations are (*totally, partially or contextually*) different. By contexts of occurrence, I mean the linguistic, situational, social, and cultural environment in which the word is used (McArthur, 1998). As seen from these notions, false friends are said to affect individual words or lemmas frequently. However, recent research identifies false friends at different levels of language. According to some linguists (Hayward and Moulin, 1984; Mona Baker, 1992; Álvarez- Lugrís, 1997; James, 1998; Dolgoplov, 2004; Armstrong, 2005), false friends occur at low or high levels of language. It is possible to find false friends at the level of phonology, morphology, grammar, prefabricated chunks, syntax or idioms. Scholars such as Álvarez- Lugrís (1997), Sheen (1997) and Frutos Martínez (2001) make reference to the existence of grammatical false friends which involve differences in gender, in the countable or uncountable nature of certain nouns in different languages. Taking this into account, a lexical item such as English “toast” would be a grammatical false friend with Spanish “tostada” because this lexeme is uncountable in one language (English “a piece of toast”) but countable in the other (Spanish “una tostada, dos tostadas, etc”). On the other hand, some authors talk about syntactic FF, similar words which require different prepositions in different languages such as, for instance, Spanish *depender de* and English *depend on* (Álvarez- Lugrís, 1997; Sheen, 1997; James, 1998: 102). In my view, these differences in syntactic distribution or grammatical properties of similar items in different languages do not necessarily imply a relation of false friendship. False friend pairs are known for the remarkable semantic differences between the two members of the pair. So therefore, the sheer fact that certain English lexical items require specific prepositions (e.g. *to abound with, to be responsible for, to consist of, to be apprehensive about, or to be integrated*

*into*) does not entail having a problem of the false friend type. Thus, words such as *integrate*, *responsible* and *abound* in sentences such as *colourful illustrations are integrated into the text; the airline is legally responsible for the safety of its passengers or the forests abound with deer, birds and squirrels* cannot be regarded as examples of false friends by the simple fact of being followed by different prepositions in English and Spanish. In fact, these English words share the same meaning in both languages and can be translated into Spanish as “integrar,” “responsable” and “abundar.” On the other hand, the existence of phraseological false friends has also been contended by Szpila (2000), Dolgoplov (2004) or Dobrovolskij and Piirainen (2005), among others. Phraseological false friends are commonly defined as “phraseological units in two or more languages whose lexical and syntactic structure is identical or similar but which differ in the scope of their extension” (Szpila, 2000: 79), or as “two or more identical expressions that evoke almost identical or very similar mental images but show significant differences in the actual meaning” (Dobrovolskij and Piirainen, 2005:109). Dobrovolskij and Piirainen explain that some multiword similes that have an identical structure in some languages show conspicuous differences in meaning. It is the case of German *reden wie ein Buch*, English *to speak/talk like a book*, French *parler comme un livre* or Spanish *hablar como un libro* (verb + preposition + indefinite article + noun) which have different meanings (“to talk a lot and very quickly,” “to speak in a pretentious manner,” “to speak elegantly in a cultivated manner” “to speak in a cultivated manner,” respectively) in these languages (Dobrovolskij and Piirainen, 2005:111). Despite this, the scarcity of phrases of this type and the fact that the elements that shape these similes do not resemble each other in spelling or pronunciation,<sup>8</sup> but in structure (cf. English *to speak like a book* or Spanish *hablar como un libro*) have led me to disregard such cases of false friendship. Therefore, this attempt to expand the notion of false friends to grammar and phraseology is not considered in the present study. For this reason and for the purposes of this dissertation, false friends are considered to be *L2 words which are similar or identical to L1 lexical items in their spoken, written or ortho-phonetic forms but which are semantically or pragmatically different in both languages* (e.g. *bank* vs. *banco*; *realise* vs. *realizar*; *exit* vs. *éxito*).

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<sup>8</sup> Formal similarity is a defining feature of false friends which cannot be confused with structural similarity. The former can be said to be a segmental feature (affects individual words) while the latter refers to higher level units of language which involve whole sequences. Taking this into account, there is no formal resemblance between the English verb *speak* (*s-p-e-a-k*) and the string of letters which shapes the Spanish word *hablar* (*h-a-b-l-a-r*).



### 1.3. False Friends Typologies

There are thousands of words between English and Spanish that can be regarded as false friends. However, not all false friends behave in the same way. Many language professionals have paid attention to this by creating taxonomies which distribute false friends into clearly distinct categories. In effect, there is a wide array of different classifications in the literature of *false friends*.

Despite the numerous individual attempts to group *false friends* into different sets according to their semantic or formal likeness, nobody has set a standard categorisation of false friends up to now (Chacón Beltrán, 2006:33). Therefore, after reviewing the main existing classifications, I will suggest an all-embracing typology which tries to reconcile some of the most relevant taxonomies by considering formal, semantic and pragmatic features of false friends.

Álvarez Lugrís (2007: 30-38) provides a general overview of different taxonomies of false friends throughout the history. Broadly speaking, five main categorisations may be distinguished: those which are based on etymological aspects (Chamizo Domínguez, 2002), on semantic criteria (Van Roey, 1990; Granger, 1996; O'Neill and Casanovas, 1997), on contextual factors (Granger and Swallow, 1988; Gouws *et. al*, 2004), on different linguistic components: syntax and grammar (Mona Baker, 1992; Sheen's 1997; Szpila, 2000; Álvarez Lugrís, 2007; Al-Wahy, 2009) and those which represent an eclectic view of the previous categorisations (Postigo Pinazo, 1997; Chacón Beltrán, 2005).

I. **Etymological classifications** (Chamizo Domínguez, 2002) regard the *origin* of the words as the main criterion for classifying *false lexical equivalents*. For example, Chamizo Domínguez distinguishes two basic groups of false friends considering the *etymology* of the members of a FF pair: *chance* false friends and *semantic* pairs. Chance false friends are pairs of words in two or more given languages that are graphically and/or phonetically similar as a result of a fortuitous diachronic process; these words are not etymologically related and they look alike due to coincidence (e.g. English *coin* “money” and French *coin* “corner;” English *rope* “string” or Spanish *ropa* “clothes”). On the other hand, semantic false friends are words in two languages which have the same etymological origin, they can be traced back to the same root (frequently of a Latin background), but they have developed different meanings in different languages over time (e.g. English

*fastidious* “comprehensive” and Spanish *fastidio* “boring”). However, Chamizo Domínguez goes beyond that and narrows down his classification of false friends by making a further distinction. Within the group of semantic pairs, he distinguishes between full false friends and partial false friends. This distinction is widely known in the literature and has been supported by many other researchers who have focused exclusively on the nature of the semantic differences between the members of a false friend pair. These classifications are explained in more detail in the following section entitled “Semantic classifications.”

II. **Semantic classifications** (Van Roey, 1990; Granger, 1996; O’Neill and Casanovas, 1997; Batchellor and Offord, 2000) generally include three types of *false friends* and establish a ranking according to the *degree of semantic overlap* between the L1 word and the word in the L2. This classification divides false friends into two main categories: *total* false friends whose meanings are totally different (e.g. English *molest* vs. Spanish *molestar*) and *partial* false friends (e.g. English *argument* vs. Spanish *argumento*), which share some common senses in both languages but not all of them. In other words, the meanings of total false friends are totally unconnected, while the meanings of partial false friends are the same in some but not in all circumstances.

Some researchers mention three main phenomena that can explain the semantic differences between false friend pairs: *segregation*, *inclusion* and *intersection* (see section 1.3.1, pp. 23-30 for further information and examples). Accordingly, total false friends would illustrate *segregation*, L1 and L2 words with a different meaning in all contexts. On the other hand, partial false friends may exhibit a relation of *inclusion* (words with extra- meaning/s in either the mother tongue or the target language), or *intersection* (words which share some of their meanings, but not all of them). Apart from that, there are other classifications that go beyond the description of the denotative meaning of false friends. These categorisations are commented on in the next section.

III. **Pragmatic classifications** (Granger and Swallow, 1988; Gouws *et. al*, 2004) take into consideration the levels of denotation, connotation, register and formality of similar words in different languages. These categorisations highlight the importance of context, the connotations associated with the lexical items in each language and the social and cultural features of these words. These pragmatic features which are relevant to the phenomenon of false friends are frequently disregarded in purely

semantic classifications. Gouws *et al.* (2004) make an interesting contribution to this issue with their distinction of various degrees of partial false friends. Within this category, they talk about false friends displaying various degrees of semantic overlap as well as false friends exhibiting *stylistic differences, different registers and different frequencies of use* in the L1 and in the L2. These scholars are assuming a different type of false friends: the pragmatic type and illustrate it with the noun *kar*. This lexeme exists in Afrikaans and Dutch; however, the use of this word differs in both languages. While in Afrikaans it is a neutral term commonly used to refer to a motor vehicle in everyday communication, Dutch people have restricted the use of this lexical item exclusively to the realm of informal communication. Therefore, the noun *kar* belongs to different registers and has different frequencies of use in Afrikaans and Dutch; they are pragmatic false friends. In the same line, Granger and Swallow (1988) refer to *stylistic* false friends. In that case, these scholars claim that this type of false friends would not represent a major stumbling block in the set of false friend pairs. Examples of stylistic false friends between English and French would be *regime/régime* and *domicile/domicile*. They are basically “cognate words” which display important differences regarding connotations and register. In fact, in the case of the first pair of words (*regime/regime*), the English noun *regime* has a pejorative meaning (it implies “a system of government which one disapproves of”) while the French word is a more general term and refers to any type of government. In the second case (*domicile/domicile*), the use of *domicile* is restricted to a particular technical field in English, that of administration and occurs in formal communication; while the French use of *domicile* is more of a common term. As illustrated here, broadly speaking, these pragmatic classifications include individual lemmas (normally cognate terms), not larger units of language (e.g. phrases or idioms) which differ in their context of occurrence (e.g. formal vs. informal) and frequency of use (e.g. everyday language vs. highly-constrained use). Nonetheless, some experts consider that false friends can be identified at different levels of language affecting grammar, whole phrases and even idiomatic expressions. The following section deals with these categorisations.

IV. **Grammatical/Syntactic classifications** (Baker, 1992 Sheen’s 1997; Szpila, 2000; Al-Wahy, 2009) are expanding the term FF to grammar, phraseological units, and structures other than individual lexical items. Álvarez Lugerís (1997) identifies false

friends at the level of *idioms/sayings, syntactic structures, grammatical gender, situations and connotations*.<sup>9</sup> Despite the inclusion of these four categories into the realm of FF, Álvarez Lugerís still postulates that false friends at word-level are the most frequent and those which cause most problems. On the other hand, Sheen's (1997) classification includes *grammatical faux amis* which are "few in number but still worthy of note" and can be of three different types: 1) *Count/non-count pairs*: L1 count nouns are L2 non-count or viceversa; e.g. erroneous use of the indefinite article with words like *information, research* and *toast, advice, soap, furniture, fruit, work, weather, lightning* and *thunder*; 2) *Similar items in different word classes*: This group includes similar L1 and L2 words belonging to different parts of speech. One example of that is the French noun *tentative* ("attempt") which is identical in form to the English adjective of the same form *tentative* ("hesitant"); 3) *Syntactic false friends* are often caused by verbs of similar form and meaning having different or no prepositions after them, such as French *dépendre de* vs. English *depend on*, French *approuver* vs. English *approve of*, French *consister en* vs. English *consist of*, French *payer* vs. English *pay for*. More recently, Al-Wahy's paper (2009) on idiomatic false friends in English and modern standard Arabic draws our attention to the existence of false friends at the level of idioms. He defines idiomatic false friends as "pairs of set phrases that have the same literal meaning in two languages but differ as regards their idiomatic meaning or their sociolinguistic and stylistic features" (2009:104). His taxonomy of idiomatic false friends indicates that this author is thinking about the presence of false friends in idioms more than in individual lemmas. Apart from applying the label of FF to idioms, Al-Wahy refers to two main types of FF: semantic false friends which can be total and partial, and cultural<sup>10</sup> or stylistic false friends (Al-Wahy, 2009:108). An illustrative example of this last type of false friends might be the English idiom *to live in sin* and its corresponding *الخطيئة في عاش* (lit., "to live in the sin") in modern Arabic. Both expressions refer to a couple that lives together without being married. However, while the English version is mostly used in jocular fashion today, this denotes something serious in the Arabic speech community. In this

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<sup>9</sup> They imply different sociocultural aspects and implications between languages.

<sup>10</sup> Cultural or stylistic false friends typically have their origin in cultural differences between the L1 and the L2 or in the particular features of vocabulary use which include aspects such as the level of formality, register and domain of those words in different countries (formal or informal, technical vs. non-technical, outdated vs. modern, humorous vs. serious, politically correct vs. incorrect).

sense, it is possible to consider Al-Wahy's classification as being quite eclectic. It takes into account many different aspects: form (idiomatic units), meaning (total and partial), use (style, register) and sociolinguistic aspects (culture). Al-Wahy's categorisation combines semantic, pragmatic and grammatical classifications; many other scholars do the same. The following section deals with other eclectic classifications more thoroughly.

**V. Eclectic classifications.** Under this label, there are remarkable classifications of false friends which take into account at least two of the aforementioned aspects of false friends. Postigo Pinazo, Chacón Beltrán and even Chamizo Domínguez are included in this group.

On the one hand, Postigo Pinazo (1997) takes into account the etymology, formal similarities and semantic characteristics of different word pairs and classifies FF into four separate categories:

- *Phonetic false friends* (English *bitch* vs. Spanish *bicho*), L2 words with a pronunciation which might bring to mind another similar term in the L1.
- *Graphic false friends* (English *rape* vs. Spanish *rape*); L2 words with a written form which might remind us of another similar term in the mother tongue.
- *False friends derived from loanwords*: when a word that has been taken from the other language has changed its meaning in the receptive language (English *meeting* vs. Spanish *mitin*); and
- *Semantic false friends*: words with the same etymological origin which differ in meaning. They can be subdivided into total (English *egregious* vs. Spanish *egregio*) and partial (English *aggregate* vs. Spanish *agregado*).

On the other hand, Chacón Beltrán (2000, 2006) presents a typological classification of “cognates,” as he calls them, according to three variables. His *Clasificación de Cognados Verdaderos y Falsos* (CCVF) comprises two main criteria: form (graphic/phonetic false friends) and meaning (partial/total/semantic coincidence/divergence). Within this classification, there are four types that qualify as *false friends*: total graphic false friends (e.g. English *lecture* vs. Spanish *lectura*, total phonetic false friends (e.g. English *assist* vs. Spanish *asistir*), partial graphic false friends (e.g. English *career* vs. Spanish *carrera*) and partial phonetic false friends (e.g. English (e.g. English *attend* vs. Spanish *atender*).

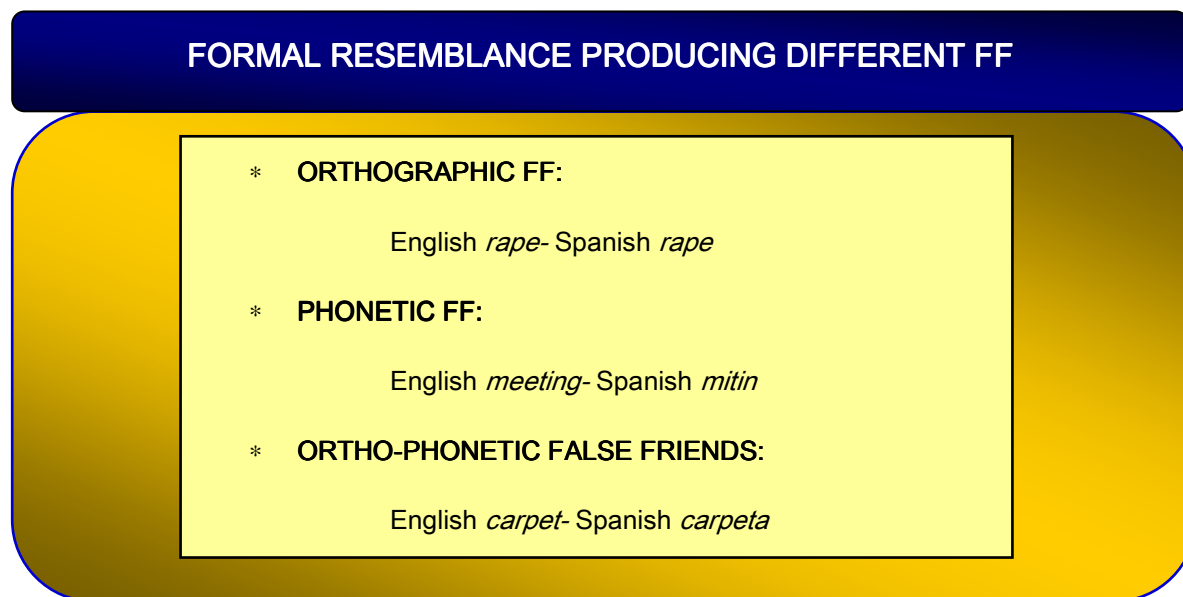
- *Total false friends* with clear semantic differences in both languages can be graphic or phonetic. They are graphic when it is the written form and not the pronunciation of the word what causes the learners' misidentification.
  - *Graphic* → English *lecture*
  - *Phonetic* → English *assist*
- *Partial false friends* share a meaning which is acceptable in some contexts but not in others. They can be also graphic or phonetic depending on whether their written form or their pronunciation is the main cause of confusion.
  - *Graphic* → English *career*
  - *Phonetic* → English *attend*

Although Chamizo Domínguez's classification has been included under the category of etymological classifications due to his emphasis on the diachronic dimension of some false friends (semantic false friends, when the two members of the pair go back to the same origin; and chance false friends, when the two words look alike just by coincidence), this classification might be also included in this section since it takes both the etymology of the terms and their degree of semantic similarity or dissimilarity into account.

### *1.3.1. Shortcomings of these Typologies*

As shown above, some of these typologies take into consideration form as well as the semantic component involved in FF (e.g. Postigo Pinazo, 1997; Chacón Beltrán, 2005). In spite of that, these classifications seem to disregard certain aspects. It is certainly true that linguists focus on two aspects in word forms which produce different kinds of FF: spelling and pronunciation. Thus, as regards spelling, two groups are commonly mentioned: **orthographic false friends** (similar spelling) and **phonetic false friends** (similar pronunciation), depending on whether the formal similarities are in the written or the spoken form of the word, respectively. Nevertheless, strictly speaking, this division between graphic and phonetic FF is not as straightforward as some researchers seem to support. In effect, it is useful to include another group of misleading items, that of **ortho-phonetic false friends**. This category would embrace those lexical units

whose written and spoken forms are similar in the L1 and in the L2 at the same time as in, for instance, English *carpet* - Spanish *carpeta* and, and even English *bitch* - Spanish *bicho*. False friends are *ortho-phonetic* when the two members of the pair are similar in their spoken and written language disregarding language specific phonological (e.g. distinctions in vowel length or articulation) and morphological features (e.g. affixes: English suffix *-ation*, *-ity* for Spanish *-ación*, *-idad*). Figure 1 illustrates these types of false friends with examples.



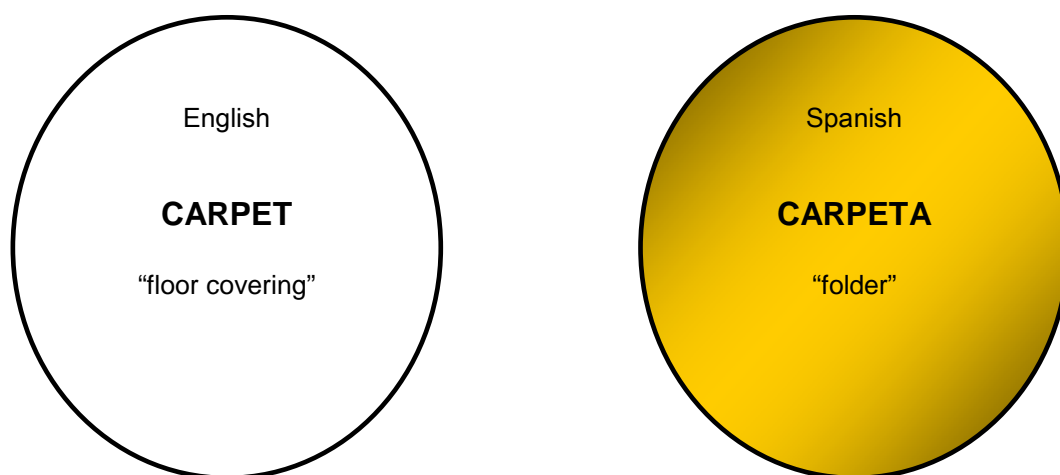
**FIGURE 1:** Types of Formal Resemblance and False Friendship

In addition to this division of false friends according to their outward similarities, the semantic component of these words should be taken into account. This entails a more complex issue. Broadly speaking, differences in meaning between FF in two languages are frequently classified using the **total** versus **partial** dichotomy. These two terms refer to the semantic relationship between the two members of a false friend pair. Thus, whenever there is no semantic relationship between L1 and L2 similar words, we are facing *absolute* or *total false friends* (English *actual* vs. Spanish *actual*); and, by contrast, whenever the meanings of L1 and L2 similar words converge at some point, we are dealing with *partial false friends*. The latter are also called *fickle false friends* (Walsh, 2005) and they can exhibit two different types of semantic relationship: (1) **overlapping** (see Figure 4): similar L1 and L2 words which have at least one shared meaning (English *collar* and Spanish *collar*, both being used in the context of dogs) and (2) **inclusion** (see Figure 3): pairs of words in which one of its members -either the one in L1 or that in L2- is wider in meaning and includes the other (e.g. Spanish *Ámerica-*

English *America*,<sup>11</sup> the former being broader in meaning than the latter since the Spanish noun alludes to the whole American continent, -North, Central and South America-, while the English noun refers to those people who are specifically from the United States).

Undoubtedly, one of the most illustrative ways to understand the distinctive semantic features of each category of false friends is by means of Venn diagrams.<sup>12</sup> These diagrams (Granger, 1996; Chamizo Domínguez, 2009) will adopt three different forms: one representing total false friends and the remaining referring to the two types within the partial false friend group.

**Semantic DIVERGENCE:** On the one hand, *total* FF imply a conspicuous difference in meaning (e.g. English *embarrassed* vs. Spanish *embarazada*, English *comprehensive* vs. Spanish *comprensivo*, English *rope* vs. Spanish *ropa*, English *carpet* vs. Spanish *carpeta*). This semantic divergence would be represented in two separate circles, which lay emphasis on the obvious semantic differences existing in both languages:



**FIGURE 2:** Semantic Divergence/Contrast/Segregation/Total False Friends

As regards *fickle* FF, two types of PARTIAL false friends are to be distinguished: those false friend pairs which display a relation of *semantic inclusion* and those which

<sup>11</sup> With respect to the Spanish noun *Ámerica*, things seem to be changing now; its corresponding adjective *americano* can be already used to refer to things happening in the U.S. not in other parts of the continent as shown in the Spanish phrase *costumbres americanas*.

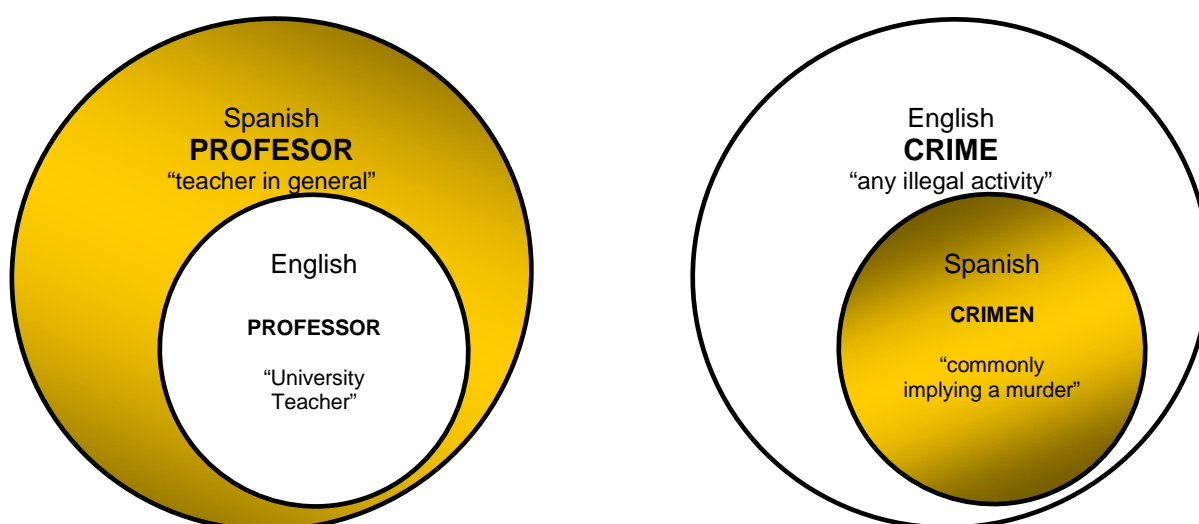
<sup>12</sup> Invented in 1881 by John Venn. Although these diagrams are often used in mathematics to show relationships between sets, they are useful for examining similarities and differences between words in language and instruction. In fact, Venn diagrams are often used by teachers in the classroom as a mechanism to help students compare and contrast two or several items.



show a certain *overlap* in meaning with at least one shared denotation (Van Roey, 1990; Granger, 1996; Chamizo Domínguez, 2009).

Semantic INCLUSION: There is inclusion when one member of the pair has a broader sense and includes the other member with a more restrictive sense. L1 lexical items can have either a broader or narrower meaning than their L2 counterparts, as illustrated in the examples below and as represented in figure 3.

- ◇ Examples of English terms having a more restrictive meaning than Spanish are the following. In Spanish *propaganda* means “advertising” in general and has a broader meaning than its English counterpart *propaganda*, generally found in the political context, as in *political propaganda*. English *professor* makes reference to a university teacher while Spanish *profesor* can be applied to any teacher (at primary school, secondary education or university). While in English a *reunion* is a meeting of people who have not seen each other for a while, Spanish *reunión* can be a meeting or gathering of any kind.
- ◇ The opposite situation is found when the English word has a broader meaning than its Spanish counterpart. E.g. English *crime* or *topic* vs. Spanish *crimen* or *tópico*. English *topic* means “subject/theme” in general whereas Spanish *tópico* makes reference to a “cliché.” The English noun *crime* is used in relation to any punishable act, while the Spanish term *crimen* has a more restrictive meaning, namely that of “murder.”

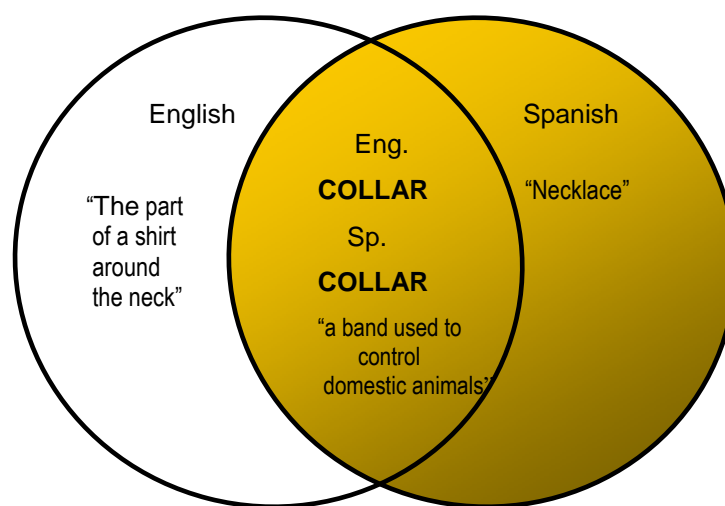


**FIGURE 3:** Semantic Inclusion/Partial False Friends

As seen from Figure 3, partial false friends illustrating semantic inclusion consist of two words in which one member of the pair is in an inclusive relation with the other. In spite of all that, it may be the case that the L2 word is not broader or narrower in meaning, but the L2 lexical item shares some of the senses with a given L1 lexical item, then overlapping is at work (Figure 4).

**Semantic OVERLAP:** It occurs when two similar words have at least one shared meaning in the first and in the foreign language and at least one different meaning. One factor which triggers off this type of partiality is the polysemic nature of most words or their multiplicity of meanings.

- ◇ Examples of overlapping are English *collar* and Spanish *collar* or English *bank* and Spanish *banco*. In the first case, *collar* can be used to refer to a “dog collar” in both languages, but while the Spanish noun is very frequently used to denote a necklace, the English word is more commonly seen in connection with neckbands of shirts and coats. In a similar vein, *bank* and *banco* are both used to refer to a financial institution where you can keep money in, but they also have uses that are particular to each language “river bank” in English or “bench” in Spanish.



**FIGURE 4: Semantic Overlap/Intersection**

As seen from these diagrams, there are three main types of semantic relations which can be identified between two similar-looking words of two different languages: divergence of meaning, semantic inclusion and overlapping. These semantic differences and similarities found in the L1 and L2 false friend pairs give way to two clearly-distinct types of FF: absolute FF and partial FF; this last group being larger since it contains L1 and L2 words whose meanings include one another or overlap. In the same

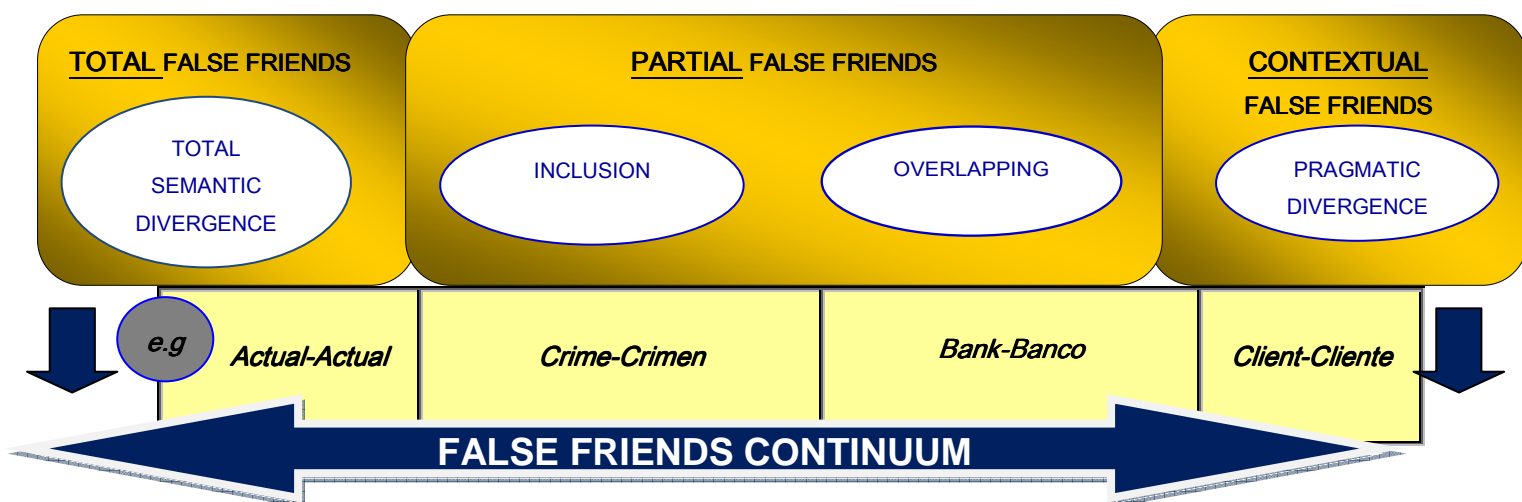
fashion, partial FF exhibiting semantic overlap are more frequently found than FF illustrating semantic inclusion.

As illustrated in Figures 2, 3 and 4, FF are frequently classified according to the basic differences in the denotative meanings of L1 and L2 items. Yet, we cannot forget that speakers of different languages normally attach certain nuances, uses and connotations to words (Gouws et al., 2004; Zethsen, 2004; Mattheoudakis and Patsala, 2007). Pragmatic differences between L1 and L2 similar items give origin to a different type of false friends. Then it is necessary to bear in mind that a thorough categorisation of false friends should include not only aspects, such as form and denotative meaning (referential meaning), but also differences in use (considerations of frequency, style and connotations of the items in the first and in the foreign language). In this respect, Granger (1996), Gouws *et. al* (2004), and, more recently, Al-Wahy (2009) point at those pairs of words which exhibit stylistic differences, different registers and different frequencies of use in different languages. Granger mentions those “quasi-synonymous cognate pairs which belong to different registers of language,” (1996:117) such as English *ameliorate*; French *améliorer*, one being more formal or technical than the other. On the other hand, Gouws *et al.* (2004) reveal that in spite of the fact that both Afrikaans and Dutch have and use the noun *kar* in their lexical repertoires, the use of this word differs significantly in both languages. While *kar* is the neutral term to refer to a “motorcar” in Afrikaans, Dutch people use *auto* as the unmarked word and restrict the use of *kar* to informal communication contexts. These differences are important and should be considered in translation. Thus, Afrikaans *kar* should never be translated into Dutch *kar* due to the aforementioned differences concerning use and register (Gouws et al, 2004: 797-802). Al-Wahy also supports this idea and claims that “direct translation [of these false friends] from one language into another would cause change or loss of such aspects, which could be crucial to the message being conveyed” (2009: 116). Thus, when dealing with cultural or stylistic false friends, this scholar points out that it is important to consider the cultural context where these lexical items are used because it certainly determines the referential meaning of words. As a way of illustration, he mentions the expression *weekend* that normally refers to Saturday and Sunday in English while the corresponding term in Modern Arabic الأسبوع نهاية (literally “the end of the week”) typically denotes Thursday and Friday or Friday and Saturday (2009: 117).

Despite of the fact that these researchers mention this last type of false friend, they do it within the category of partials; I would consider those pairs of words which exhibit stylistic differences, different registers and different frequencies of use in the L1 and in the L2 as members of a new category of FF, since it is not the semantics of the words, but their pragmatics or context of use which makes these lexical items different. Accordingly, we can speak of the existence of a false friend continuum which comprises three main different categories: *total false friends*, *partial false friends* and *contextual false friends*.

- **Total FF** (can be also referred to as full FF) display no semantic resemblance at all in the L1 and in the L2 (e.g. *success* vs. *suceso*)
- **Partial FF** (can be also referred to as fickle FF) exhibit some shared meaning/s in the L1 and in the L2 (e.g. *batteries* vs. *batería*)
- **Contextual FF** (can be also referred to as pragmatic, stylistic FF) share their basic denotative meaning but are used in different registers, have different connotative associations and can be used in slightly different contexts (e.g. *obtain* vs. *obtener*).

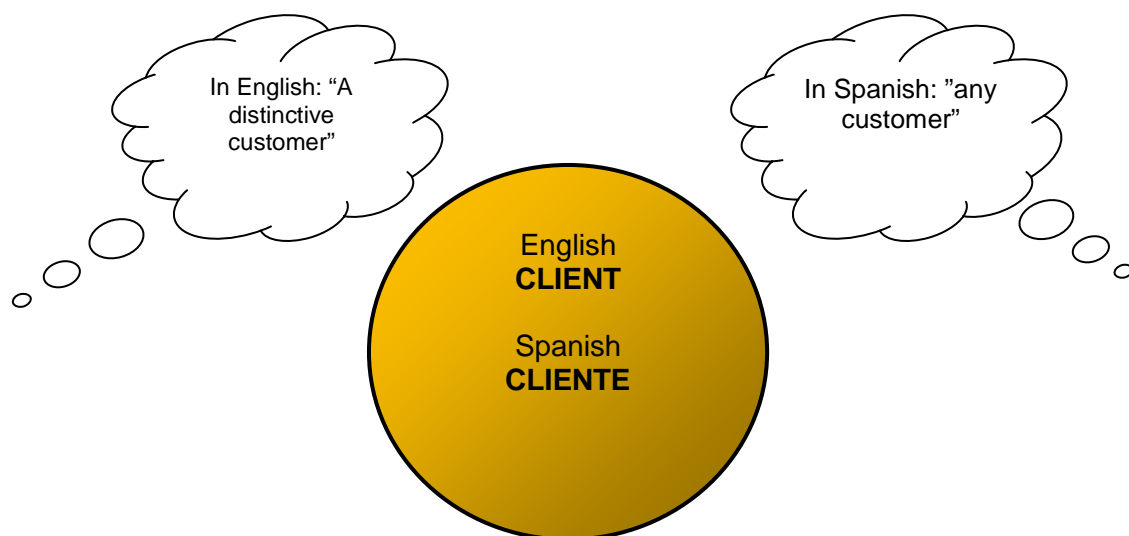
Figure 5 below illustrates this classification of false friends adding this type: the slightest version of FF which encompasses pragmatic differences between pairs of words.



**FIGURE 5:** Continuum of False Friends

CONTEXT-SENSITIVE aspects of meaning: *Contextual* false friends allow for context-sensitive aspects of meaning, such as pragmatic use, sociolinguistic traits,

register- restrictions and connotations. If we apply the Venn-diagram representation to this new category, it could be represented as follows:



**FIGURE 6:** Pragmatic Differences: Contextual False Friends

The circle in the middle represents the common meaning which is the same in essence, that of “someone who buys goods or services from a shop or company.” The bubbles on both sides specify the pragmatic distinctions and the connotative nuances that have been attached to those items in each particular language and culture. In Spanish, *cliente* is a common word for a customer, while English *client* is quite specific and is normally found in the context of lawyers and hotels. All these nuances of meaning and use should be made clear in any classification of false friends which aims at being comprehensive. I have already illustrated the false friend continuum that I propound in this dissertation in Figure 5. The next section describes this proposal in more detail. This new classification intends to fill in all those lacks which have been observed in previous categorisations.

### *1.3.2. Towards a New Classification of Spanish-English False Friends*

Although a big effort has been made to categorize FF, there are some areas which need further clarification. In my view, there is not a comprehensive classification of FF. Two reasons are here at work:

Firstly, nobody (to my knowledge) mentions the possible three types of FF depending on whether formal resemblance is on spelling, pronunciation or both. Thus, I consider at least three types of FF in this sense (Figure 1): ❶ **orthographic** false friends whose spelling conjure up a L1 word although the pronunciation is completely different in the L1 and in the L2 (English *rare* vs. Spanish *raro*); ❷ **phonetic** false friends whose pronunciation hint at a word in the mother tongue (English *ball*, Spanish *bol*); and ❸ **ortho-phonetic** FF whose spelling and pronunciation recall words in the mother tongue, as in the case of English *assist* or *attend* which are similar to Spanish *asistir* and *atender* both in their written and spoken forms.

Secondly, most experts on FF focus on the semantic differences between similar items and pay no attention to those contextual nuances, language specific uses and connotations of words which are crucial and should be regarded as significant factors for the classification of FF (Gouws, 2004; Zethsen, 2004; Mattheoudakis and Patsala, 2007; Al-Wahy, 2009). Nonetheless, usage/pragmatic or contextual information seems to be generally overlooked in false friend typologies; in fact, the most widely-accepted classification of FF pays attention to the denotative meanings of L1 and L2 items (total vs. partial distinction). A thorough classification of false friends should then consider not only the words' referential meaning but also other features, such as frequency, style, register and connotations. It is undeniable that pragmatic differences between L1 and L2 similar items also yield a relationship of the false friend type. Some of those scholars who consider these pragmatic features claim that these words constitute the weakest or slightest version of false friendship (Gouws et al 2004), others place them at the level of semantic false friends (Al-Wahy, 2009). In the same line as Al-Wahy, I would consider those pairs of words which exhibit differences in style, register, frequency and connotation as members of a new category of FF, since it is not the semantics of the words, but their pragmatics or context of use which makes these lexical items different. Thus, in the typology proposed in this dissertation, it is possible to speak about a false friend continuum composed by three main types of false friends whose degree of semantic resemblance varies according to the category they belong. ❶ **total/full false** friends imply a conspicuous semantic difference in meaning in both languages: Some examples are English *robe* vs. Spanish *robo*, English *actually* vs. Spanish *actualmente* or English *diverted* vs. Spanish *divertido*. In this group, those false friend pairs which display a *proximal relation* are included. I will use this term to refer to those L1 and L2 lexical items which seem to share a connective thread of meaning. English *parents* vs.

Spanish *parientes* related to the field of family relations, English *idiom* vs. Spanish *idioma* linked to the area of language describes a particular kind of expression or a particular style in language but Spanish *idioma* refers, quite simply, to a language. English *collar* vs. Spanish *collar* linked to a particular part of the body, the neck and English *constipated* vs. Spanish *constipado* connected to the world of illness. **② partial false friends:** They include in their turn two main subtypes: *a) Semantically inclusive terms.* Those false friend pairs which exhibit a relationship of semantic *inclusion*. *Semantic inclusion* may mean that L1 words that can have either a broader or narrower meaning than their L2 counterparts. English *intoxication* “drunkenness” vs. Spanish *intoxicación* which is “poisoning in general regardless of the substance that induces it” or English *crime* “including all offences punishable by law,” and Spanish *crimen* “murder” are two examples. *b) Semantic overlap/ intersection:* Those false friends which have at least one shared meaning and one different meaning in the two languages. One factor which triggers off this type of partiality is the polysemic nature of words. English “notes” and Spanish “notas” may overlap in meaning as in the field of music (both refer to a “particular musical sound”) or have uses that are particular to each language. In English, a piece of paper money can be referred to as *a bank note*, while in Spanish “nota” cannot be used in that way but it can also refer to “students’ marks.” Another example of overlapping is English *paper* and Spanish *papel*. **③ Contextual/pragmatic false friends** (also called *stylistic* false friends (Granger,1996)): This third big group of false friends includes similar L1 and L2 words which display contextual restrictions and register differences which may go unnoticed for non-native speakers of English. Some instances are: English *preoccupy* (formal term for *worry about*) and Spanish *preocuparse* (unmarked term in Spanish), English *client* (high-class connotation)/ Spanish *cliente* (unmarked term for any customer). As regards Spanish and English, there are two factors producing FF in its slightest or pragmatic form: stylistic restrictions and connotative nuances. *a) Stylistic differences*<sup>13</sup> between similar L1 and L2 words (or differences in the degree of formality): one example of this type of FF would be English *obtain* and Spanish *obtener*. Spanish speakers are manifestly tempted to use Latin-based forms which are typically formal. This often leads to a stylistic inappropriacy. In this pair, *obtener* is the standard term in Spanish while English *obtain* is used in formal contexts. This means that they are partial FF because

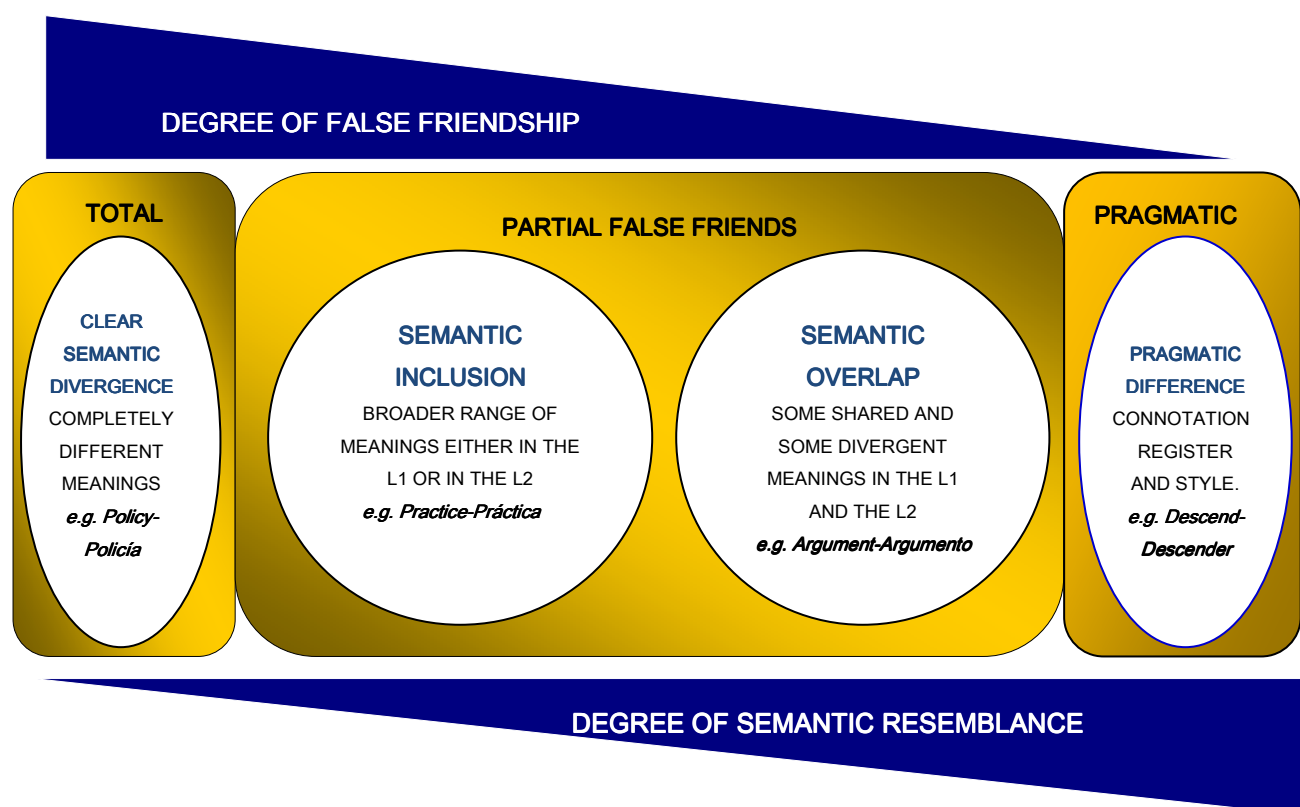
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<sup>13</sup> English *extinguish* and Spanish *extinguir* are stylistic false friends. Using *extinguish* in English (instead of *put out*) sounds stilted, artificial and overformal in everyday conversation.

they are not totally equivalent; they do not apply to the same contexts. *b) Additional connotative factors* are also of crucial significance and play a role in many cases of the slightest version of English-Spanish false friendship. Of a connotative order is the difference between English *client* (= “customer”) and Spanish *cliente*, the former denoting a clearly higher class while the latter is completely neutral. Something similar happens with *notorious/notorio*. Whereas English *notorious* means “famous for something bad”, Spanish *notorio* has not such a negative connotation, and means, merely, “famous.”

Apart from admitting the existence of this so-marginally mentioned pragmatic side of FF, the categorisation proposed in this dissertation sets out a continuum of false friends which allows us to establish different levels of confusion. As can be gathered from Figure 7 (based on Gouwls *et. al*, 2004: 806), the level of falseness decreases as the semantic resemblance increases. As we proceed from left to right, we move from total to partial FF and, from partial FF to contextual FF. The degree of semantic resemblance is increasingly augmenting (i.e. partial false friends have more meanings in common than total false friends, and in the case of contextual false friends, the only disparity existing between the items lies in nuances of use) and obvious meaning differences between L1 and L2 gradually disappear. Thus false friendship is hardly perceived in the last pairs which represent different stylistic uses, connotations and regional variants. Nevertheless, the implications of words, their different connotations and levels of formality must be taken into account in translation or in everyday communication. For example, Spanish *notorio* and *descender* are different from English *notorious* and *descend*; on the one hand, English *notorious* and Spanish *notorio* have different connotations; and on the other hand, English *descend* and Spanish *descender* belong to different registers and differ in the degree of formality. This type of connotative and contextual differences should be taken into account in the description and analysis of false friends as well as in the field of translation and in the area of second language acquisition.





**FIGURE 7:** Classification of English-Spanish False Friends

This classification covers many subtle nuances and is narrowed down to describing minor differences between pairs of words in two languages. The main problem of distributing words into categories is that there are some semantically complex terms which are difficult to categorise. In fact, the idea of the continuum tries to emphasise the arbitrary delimitation of boundaries between false friends. There are some words which stand at one of the two ends of the continuum clearly, but there are other lexical items which can belong to different groups of false friends. It is the case of pairs of words, such as English *collar* and Spanish *collar* which are essentially total false friends since they have two different referents in life (“neckline of a T-shirt” and “necklace,” respectively). However, if we make a detailed analysis of the meanings and uses of these words, they both can be used for a *dog collar*. The same happens with a pair of adjectives, such as English *various* and Spanish *varios*, almost identical in meaning in both languages but with some minor contextual differences (it is possible to say *varias personas* in Spanish, but *various people* does not sound right in English). For this reason, two “in-between” types of false friends can be included: false friends that are mostly total with some minor overlaps in both languages (e.g. *attend* vs. *atender*) and partial false friends that move towards the pragmatic side (e.g. *ultimate* vs. *último*).

TOTAL (no overlap)	MOSTLY TOTAL (atypical overlap)	PARTIAL (some overlap)	TOWARDS PRAGMATIC (≠ semantic nuances)	PRAGMATIC (≠ nuances in use)
FABRIC-FÁBRICA (no overlap at all)	ATTEND-ATENDER (minor overlap: attend to)	FATAL-FATAL (diff: mortal)	VARIOUS-VARIOS (nuance: many different)	CLIENT-CLIENTE (use: high/neutral)
LOCALS-LOCALES (no overlap at all)	COLLAR-COLLAR (minor overlap: dog collar)	BLANK-BLANCO (diff: unemotional)	ULTIMATE-ÚLTIMO (also “last” in Spanish)	

**TABLE 1:** Continuum of False Friends with “In-Between” Categories

This classification provides a useful framework for the semantic-pragmatic analysis of false friends. By looking at this taxonomy, we can say that a) there exist different types of false friends between English and Spanish; b) the degree of semantic divergence is not the same for all types of false friends (from no overlap to minor overlap, from some overlap to minor semantic nuances and finally, to different nuances in use); c) boundaries between categories are sometimes fuzzy; and there are false friends that appear to be “in between” categories (e.g. *mostly total* and *towards pragmatic*).

In any case, after dealing with the semantic-pragmatic side of false friends, it seems relevant to end this section by drawing attention to the fact that there are two key aspects for the identification of FF between two different languages: word form and semantic content. We should not forget that formal resemblance is an important factor within FF. In effect, it is the formal likeness of such items and their resemblance to the learners’ L1 which misleads students in the understanding of the L2 and this might bring about difficulties in the learning process and in the production of the L2.

The following section discusses the presence of false friends between related and unrelated languages. It also draws attention to the existence of intralinguistic false friends and deals with the impact and effects of false friends on crosscultural situations.

#### 1.4. False Friends across and within Languages

The study of false friends is generally associated with genetically related languages (Al-Wahy, 2009: 101) and is commonly seen as an *interlinguistic* phenomenon (Koessler and Derocquigny, 1928; Hill, 1982; Prado, 2001; Chamizo Domínguez and Nerlich, 2002; Shlesinger and Malkiel, 2005); however, this linguistic phenomenon may also affect unrelated languages and, what is more outstanding, false friends can be detected

within varieties of the same language. This section examines this issue and gives particular examples of the existence of treacherous words across and within languages.

#### *1.4.1. False Friends across Different Languages*

Most false friends originate in cognate words which have acquired a different meaning in different contexts (e.g. German *Gift* “poison” / English *gift* “present”); this is the reason why FF are fairly common in closely related languages, although this does not mean that FF are only found among cognate pairs of languages. As a matter of fact, there are false friends among unrelated languages, such as Polish and Spanish or English and Russian. For example, Polish *spirytus* and Spanish *espíritu* are similar looking words which differ in meaning significantly. The Spanish item means “soul,” whereas the Polish term makes reference to “alcoholic drinks.” The same happens with English *sympathetic* and Russian *simpatichnyi* which have two very different meanings: “compassionate” and “good-looking,” respectively. Apart from these languages, false friends can be perceived among many different cognate and non-cognate languages. Some interesting pairs of false friends across languages of different types (cognates and non-cognates) are shown below, together with their corresponding meanings between inverted commas.

⇒ Cognates:

German *Gift* “poison” / English *gift* “present”

Dutch *brand* “fire”/English *brand* “make”

Italian *cazzo* “cock, penis”/ Spanish *cazo* “saucepan”

⇒ Non-cognate languages:

English *sympathetic* “compassionate” / Russian *simpatichnyi* “good-looking”

Finish *juusto* “cheese”/ Spanish *justo* “fair”

Portuguese *bunda* “buttocks”/ Czeck *bunda* “coat”

Slovakian *misa* “dish” / Spanish *misa* “religious mass”

English *man* “male” and Persian /*man*/ “I”

When considering false friends across languages, it is worth mentioning that the occurrence of false friends differs from one language pair to another.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> See false friends for various language pairs listed throughout Hill’s *A Dictionary of False Friends* (1982) or in the *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* (Procter, 1995)

For a given language pair it may happen that false friends play a minor role, whereas in another language pair the occurrence of false friends could be of such an extent that special dictionaries of false friends can be compiled. (Rufus H. Gouws, D. J. Prinsloo<sup>o</sup>, Gilles-Maurice de Schryver, 2004: 797).

The list of false friends between English and other languages seems to be almost inexhaustible. Hill's dictionary shows how open and closed classes of words are affected by the false friendship phenomenon. Within the open category of words, nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs can be subjected to false friendship. Thus, for instance, the English noun *public* does not mean "audience, spectators" (as in Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, Danish, German, Dutch, Norwegian and Swedish) but it is the opposite of "private;" the verb *congeal* does not imply the idea of "to freeze up" (as in Portuguese, Spanish, Italian and French) but "to solidify;" the adjective *precious* is not "beautiful" (as in Spanish) but "valuable;" and the adverb *eventually* does not mean "fortuitously" (as in French, Spanish, Italian, Danish, German, Dutch, Norwegian and Swedish) but "finally." With regard to the closed class of words, the English relative pronouns *where* and *when* are false friends with the German similar words, meaning "who" and "if," respectively; and the English prepositions *up*, *under* or *over* are deceptive for Dutch people. Hill's *Dictionary of False Friends* (1982) is one example of the many dictionaries that have registered false friends between English and other languages, but there are many more (see chapter 2, section 2.2.4. *False Friends and Lexicographical Research*, pp. 49).

#### 1.4.2. False Friends within the Same Language

As we have previously seen, the false friendship phenomenon is often associated with different languages either related, such as English, French, and German, or unrelated, such as Russian, English and Spanish (Baker, 1992: 25); however, false friends can even be found among different varieties of the same language, some examples of *interlingual* false friends are:

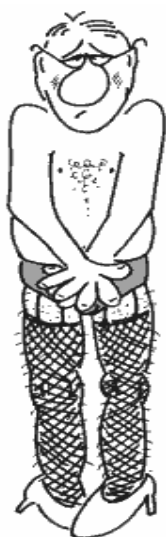
- ⇒ British English *fag* "cigarette" / American English *fag* "gay"
- ⇒ European Spanish *carro* "cart" / Latin American Spanish *carro* "car"

Contrary to what happens with false friends across different languages, the existence of *intralingual* false friends is not so widely recognised as to register special dictionaries. In fact, to my knowledge, there does not exist any dictionary registering this sort of lexical differences between different varieties of the same language. As

aforesaid, FF do not only occur across languages but also within varieties of the same language, and this is conspicuous from certain words in British and American English (Rollings, 2001: 909). Examples of false equivalents between these two varieties are *biscuit*, *fag*, *pants*, *rubber*, *momentarily*, *suspenders* or the expression *to table a motion* (Roca-Varela, 2011: 132). Those lexical items are used both in British and American English but their meanings differ quite a lot in both varieties of English.

Undoubtedly, one of the most curious cases of false friendship between British English and American English is the one represented by two clothing terms: *pants* and *suspenders*. These words mean quite different things in Britain and in America. Thus according to the OED, the word *pants* is chiefly used in *North America* (as well as in New Zealand, Australia, and South Africa) with the meaning of “trousers of any kind, except in the names of particular styles of trousers, as *loon*, *hot pants*,” while in Britain, its sense is “(men's or women's) underpants.” On the other hand, *suspenders* denote “a pair of straps passing over the shoulders to hold up the trousers” in the U.S. while the British use of this word is “a device attached to the top of a stocking or sock to hold it up in place” (OED Online).<sup>15</sup>

Pants and suspenders in British English



Pants and suspenders in American English



**FIGURE 8:** *Pants and Suspenders*: Intralingual FF in British and American English

<sup>15</sup> James Murray, Henry Bradley, William Craigie and Charles Onions (eds.). *Oxford English Dictionary*. 1884-1933. 10 vols. Robert Burchfield (eds.), *Supplement*, 1972-1986, 4 vols. 1989, John Simpson and Edmund Weiner (eds.) *Oxford English Dictionary* (2nd edition), 20 vols. John Simpson, Edmund Weiner and Michael Proffitt (eds.), *Additions Series*, 1993-1997 (3rd edition). In progress: John Simpson (eds.), *OED Online*, March 2000- <www.oed.com>

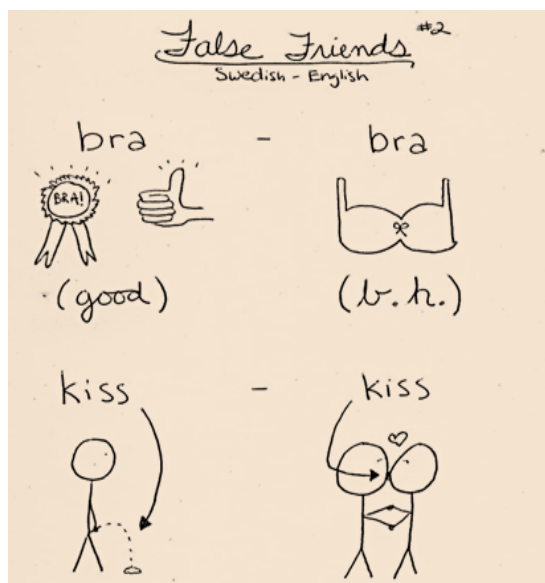
Food-related terms, such as *biscuit* or *buns* are two other examples of interlingual false friends; they refer to two different realities. A *biscuit* in Britain is a flat sweet cake (known as *cookie* in the U.S.) while in America, a *biscuit* is a round flaky pastry. On the other hand, *buns* (plural of *bun*) is a sort of sweet cake (usually round) in England while in American English, *buns* in its plural form may refer to “buttocks,” that is, the fleshy part of the body on which a person sits. Another curious case of false friendship between British and American English is illustrated by the phrase *fish and chips*. As is well-known, *fish and chips* are really popular in Britain, and Americans are also very fond of this dish; however, in American English, this phrase becomes *fish and fries*. Therefore, the second term in the phrase varies in America. This happens because the word *chips* does not mean the same in both contexts. American *chips* are sliced and crunchy potatoes (“crisps” in British English), while British *chips* are the long-shaped strips of potato included in the dish. The American term for that is *fries*. Hence the change in the American label from *fish and chips* into *fish and fries*.

Misapprehension might also arise while using the phrase *to table a motion* in a political context. In the U.K., this expression means to “place something on the agenda,” while in the U.S. it means exactly the opposite “to remove it from consideration.”

An adverb, such as *momentarily* might also produce confusion among British people when used by an American. For instance, when an American pilot is flying a plane full of British passengers and he announces that *they will be landing momentarily*, a feeling of panic or bewilderment could emerge among passengers (e.g. British people could think that something serious could be happening to the aircraft); and the reason for that may be found in the use of one single word: the word *momentarily*. In British English, this lexical item means “for a moment” (Spanish “momentáneamente”). The real intention of the American pilot is not to spread panic but to say that they will be landing “at any moment” (Spanish “de un momento a otro”), which is the meaning that *momentarily* has in American English. All these examples are obvious cases of false friends affecting different varieties of the same language. However, many of these false friends do not produce serious unamended mistakes but funny anecdotes which are worthy of note. Some of these situations are registered in blog entries of different types. *Section 1.4.3.* summarises some funny situations which may arise from the presence of false friends in different contexts.

### 1.4.3. False Friends in Cross-cultural Contexts

Many bloggers and websites report interesting anecdotes which frequently arise from the use of these misleading parallels between different languages. The existence of two funny false friends between English and Swedish is a commented topic in the Swedish blog by transparent language <<http://www.transparent.com/swedish/beware-of-false-friends/>>. The ubiquitous Swedish words *bra* “fine” and *farthinder* “speed bump” remind people of English *bra* and *fart* (English *bra* “woman’s underwear” and English *fart* “air coming out of someone’s bowels”). The verb *kiss* illustrates another case of false friends between Swedish and English.<sup>16</sup> This verb exists in both languages but refers to two different actions: *kiss* means “to pee” in Swedish, but “to caress with the lips” in English. The existence and use of these words might produce giggles, misunderstandings and confusion among non-native speakers of Swedish especially at the beginning.



**FIGURE 9:** *Bra* and *Kiss*: FF in (Swedish-English) Crosscultural Contexts

On the other hand, the first studio institute blog<sup>17</sup> tells us about an anecdote of a British tourist who wished to spend a night in a French *Hotel de Ville*, that is, in the Town Hall; he had interpreted this phrase as being the name of the hotel. The section in

<sup>16</sup> More funny examples of false friends between Swedish and English can be found in the blog *Heather's Thing-A-Days* which is available at <<http://heatherrasley.posterous.com/?tag=falsefriends>> Accessed on 09/02/2012

<sup>17</sup> A blog for English language teaching created by a private centre. Retrieved from: <<http://firstvirtual.wordpress.com/2010/02/25/what-a-mistake-to-make-%E2%80%93-falling-foul-of-french-english-false-friends/>> Accessed on 13/10/2010.

the BBC website dealing with linguistic issues includes a space for false friends in different languages <[http://www.bbc.co.uk/languages/yoursay/false\\_friends.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/languages/yoursay/false_friends.shtml)>. A participant from Honolulu (2009-03-14) makes a contribution to the topic and declares to turn red when she said to her Swiss-French companion something like: “it's great that the French don't use any *préservatifs*!” (she meant *conservateurs*). Finally, we should mention the title of the most international song by Brazilian Michel Teló *Ai se eu te pego* which was one of the top songs in winter 2011. *Ai se eu te pego* is a song which reflects a man's attraction for a beautiful woman on a Saturday's night party. Its lyrics have nothing to do with hitting someone. However, when Spanish people hear this title, they may think that this song is fostering violence; the Portuguese word *pegar* “catch, seize” is identical in form to Spanish *pegar* which means “hit someone.”

There are thousands and thousands of false friends which may produce misunderstandings between speakers of different languages. The examples and anecdotes mentioned in this section are just a symbolic representation of the thousands of situations in which false friends may produce confusion and funny remarks. The two studies presented in this dissertation will, among other things, give us an insight into real situations where English false friends may cause misunderstandings between native speakers of English and Spanish learners of English.





## CHAPTER 2.

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### 2.1. Previous Work and Different Perspectives on the Subject

Although there is no complete agreement as to whether the first and oldest work on the false friends dates back to the 17<sup>th</sup> or to the 19<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>18</sup> it is of no use denying that the issue of false friends started to be popular at the end of the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with Koessler's and Derocquigny's work, *Les Faux Amis ou les Trahisons du Vocabulaire Anglais (False Friends or the Treacherous Pitfalls of the English Vocabulary)*, published in 1928. With this work, the metaphorical phrase *faux amis* comes into being and starts to be introduced in many different languages (e.g. *false friends*, in English; *falsos amigos*, in Spanish and Portuguese; *falsi amici*, in Italian; *Falsche Freunde*, in German, etc). This phenomenon becomes, then, the focus of several studies which approach the issue from many different perspectives.

Many studies concerning these “lexical traps” are commonly included within the broader lexical issue of cognates, i.e. “pairs of words that show sound-meaning correspondences indicating their historical relationship” (Banta, 1981:129). Within these pieces of research dealing with cognates (Johnston, 1941; Frunza and Inkpen, 2006), there are some specific sections on *false cognates* (the term used to refer to what I call *false friends*). However, there are also studies which exclusively deal with false friends. These studies tend to be of a contrastive nature often displaying long lists of false friends either in the body of the surveys or in appendices (Scatori, 1932; Johnston, 1941; Prado, 1989). At any rate, and broadly speaking, there are two main attitudes to the study of *false friends*: theory-oriented surveys (description of the FF phenomenon) and practical attempts (collections of FF, analysis of difficulties in language learning and methods to avoid them).

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<sup>18</sup> Some authors, such as Chamizo Domínguez (2008) affirm that the interest in this phenomenon already started in the 17<sup>th</sup> century with a focus on Swedish and Polish false friends with the Latin title *Nomina Polonica convenientia cum Svecicis partim eundem partim diversum significantia Sensum Ordine Alphabetico collecta atque disposita* which translates into English as *An Alphabetically Provided Collection of Polish Nouns, which Partially Coincide with and Partially Diverge from Swedish Nouns* (Chamizo Domínguez, 2008:1). Others (Pérez-Velasco, 2004) suggest that the first work on false friends has a German title, *Französischer Antibarbarus*, and dates back to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Many pieces of research can be classified as **theory-oriented studies**, which mostly reflect upon false friends showing a constant struggle for finding the best label, an origin, an operative definition and/or a classification of false friends.

Most theoretical studies, of a descriptive nature, discuss the use of different labels, define the concept of FF and search for a suitable classification. For example, Townsend (1975), Martínez Contreras (1994), Frantzen (1998), Postigo Pinazo (1998), Lázár (1998), Frutos Martínez (2001), Chamizo Domínguez and Nerlich (2002), Gouws *et al.* (2004) and Sabino (2006) approach this lexical area from a theoretical perspective across different languages. Within this theoretical approach, different viewpoints are adopted. I) On the one hand, many linguists (Townsend, 1975; Postigo Pinazo, 1998; Chamizo Domínguez and Nerlich, 2002) concentrate on etymological aspects, semantic shifts and the evolution of words in different languages. They assume an etymological reason in the origin of FF and focus on the development and change of the graphic or phonetic forms, semantic shifts throughout history, meaning extension or assimilation of borrowings. II) By contrast, some other linguists (Martínez Contreras, 1994; Frantzen, 1998) do not pay attention to the etymological criterion. They argue that morphological similarity is sufficient since many false friends have their origin in a common etymology but some others are the result of a coincidental word similarity between two languages. Supporters of this last current line of thought basically consider the perception of formal similarities as the main criterion to talk about false lexical equivalents between languages. This approach considers formal similarity as the main cause of false friendship (I concur with this last view).

Some other studies, of a more practical nature, seek an application either in translation or in second language acquisition research. They are often written with a pedagogical purpose in mind. Contrastive analyses, dictionaries and glossaries of false friends are clearly conceived to serve as instruments or tools for language teachers, students, translators and researchers (Cuenca, 1987; Sañé and Schepisi, 1992; Parkes and Cornell, 1992; Marcial Prado, 2001; Walsh, 2005; Postigo Pinazo, 2007). Within this group, there are works of diverse character. Some of them focus on false friends in two different languages; that is the case of, for instance, Cuenca (1987), Walsh (2005) or Postigo Pinazo (2007) whose interest lies in English-Spanish FF, or Ferreira Montero (1994) and Vaz da Silva and Rodríguez Vilar (2004), who pay attention to Portuguese-Spanish FF among many others. By contrast, there are surveys based on a thorough and

systematic collection of false friends in many different languages whose greatest proponent is Hill (1982).

These two main approaches to the study of FF (theoretical and practical) are relevant for different areas of language research, such as: *translation* (e.g. Granger and Swallow, 1988; Bastin, 2000; Venuti, 2002; Hopkinson, 2004; Shlesinger and Malkiel, 2005; Chacón Beltrán, 2006; Polackova, 2006), *psycholinguistic research* (McClelland and Rumelhart, 1981; De Groot and Nas, 1991; Holmes and Ramos, 1993; Kirsner et al. 1993; Van Heuven *et al.*, 1998; Martínez Agudo, 1999; Fischer and Lavric, 2003; Laufer, 1990; Mattheoudakis, 1998; Pál, 2000; Friel and Kennison, 2001; Dijkstra and van Heuven, 2002; Hall, 2002; Van Ee, 2007; Sunderman and Schwartz 2008), *second language teaching and learning* (Frutos Martínez, 2001; Rollings, 2001; Kurghinyán, 2003; Chacón Beltrán, 2006; Lengeling 1996; Wagner, 2004; Durán, 2004) and *lexicography* (Cuenca, 1987; Prado, 2003; Postigo- Pinazo, 2007). The following sections aim at gathering the most basic and representative work concerning false friends in these four different areas.

## **2.2. False Friends in Different Areas of Language Research**

### *2.2.1. False Friends and Translation Studies*

Experts in the field of translation (Granger and Swallow, 1988; Postigo Pinazo, 2008; Stolze, 2011) consider false friends as a recurrent problem to the extent of describing them as “extremely insidious traps” (Chamizo Domínguez, 2006: 426) which bring important challenges to the translation process and to language professionals (Bastin, 2000; Malkiel, 2006). The translators’ constant search for equivalence sometimes drives them to choose target words on the basis of their formal resemblance with words in the source language. However, similar words between languages might not be equivalent and this may result in an inappropriate target text. Therefore, there is a need for translators (who are mediators between writer and reader) to become aware of the existence of false friends and know them thoroughly so as to avoid mistranslations and achieve accuracy in their translations.

Some scholars found out that false friends are frequent in different scientific fields including medicine (Navarro, 2005; Ricart Vayá and Candel Mora. 2009). In relation to this, Polackova (2006: 130-131), who discusses false friendship in medical texts (from

English into Slovak and from Slovak into English), states that it is essential for translators to be familiar with both the subject matter of the source text and the specific terminology used in the literature of the topic before translating. Hence, using dictionaries and electronic resources would help professionals discern what lexical items are false friends from those that are not. This would lead to a more accurate and successful translation process. Apart from that, it seems that not only translators but also interpreters (Shlesinger and Malkiel, 2005; Ruiz Mezcua, 2008) have problems with false friends. Shlesinger and Malkiel (2005) compare the use of false friends in translation and interpretation and show that false friends are more of a problem in the latter. Their experiment shows that professionals succeed in steering clear of false friends when translating since they have enough time for self-correction, whereas they are not so good at avoiding false friends during interpretation due to time and cognitive constraints (simultaneous process which does not allow careful thinking).

From what has been said, it is possible to conclude that mistakes involving false friends are not exclusive to the lowest levels of linguistic competence. They also affect professional language users, such as translators and interpreters with high language proficiency (Granger and Swallow, 1988; Hopkinson,<sup>19</sup> 2004; Chacón Beltrán, 2006). In fact, research shows that not only novices but also highly regarded professionals seem to “translate a false friend by sound rather than by meaning” (Venuti, 2002: 230-231). This shows the importance of paying attention to this complex and tricky linguistic phenomenon.

### *2.2.2. False Friends and Cognitive Research*

Current approaches in cognitive processing and in the organisation of the mental lexicon advocate for the idea that the languages which we speak are part of one interactive system in our brain (McClelland and Rumelhart, 1981; Dijkstra and van Heuven, 2002; Sunderman and Schwartz 2008). Thus, when students learn a foreign language, they cannot avoid establishing interlingual identifications between their mother tongue and the foreign language. Some researchers such as Martínez Agudo

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<sup>19</sup> Hopkinson (2004: 17) refers to the origin of the problem by stating that difficulties with false friends arise from the translators’ tendency to “search for regularity in translation processes” without reflecting on whether a L1 term has the same underlying meaning as its seemingly corresponding term in the target language. Hopkinson’s paper shows the results of corpus-based research into linguistic interference in translations from L1 Czech into L2 English.

(1999), Hall (2002) or Van Ee (2007) explain that the L1 lexicon has an important role in shaping the learners' mental organisation of the L2 lexicon to such an extent that the L2 vocabulary is believed to be "acquired mostly on the basis of equivalence connections in which the L2 lexical items are related to their respective L1 translation equivalents" (Martínez Agudo, 1999). In relation to *false friends*, the literature on the linguistic processing of *interlingual homographs* (the preferred label in cognitive linguistics) is still limited. Yet, research (De Groot and Nas, 1991; Van Heuven *et al.*, 1998) shows that false friends are stored together in our brains under the automatic assumption that similar L1 and L2 forms have similar meanings (especially in related languages). Consequently, the meaning of the L1 is automatically activated and applied to the L2 lexical item (Holmes and Ramos, 1993; Lalor and Kirsner, 2001; Hall, 2002). Despite the fact that this formal overlap between the L1 and in the L2 does not entail a semantic correspondence, the L1 meaning is copied into the L2 orthographic neighbour. As a consequence, the access to the conceptual system is mediated by the L1 lexical representations (Kroll and Stewart, 1994) and this seems to be especially obvious when the L1 word is a high frequency item (Conklin, 2005). Moreover, the fact that learners process the L2 item "through the L1 word form and not directly from the L2 lexical representation in word recognition" (Pál 2000: 41) leads to a "retreat" in L2 acquisition because "once an inappropriate association is learned, it may become more difficult for the learner to form the correct association" (Friel and Kennison, 2001:253). This cognitive mechanism could explain why language learners tend to misuse and misinterpret false friends even at advanced levels (Fischer and Lavric 2003, Laufer 1990, Mattheoudakis 1998). In this manner, the L1 lexical knowledge holds the L2 learning process back and the teachers' action becomes essential. This links with our next issue: False Friends and Language Teaching.

### 2.2.3. *False Friends and Language Teaching*<sup>20</sup>

The fact that false friends often lead to serious problems of interference that may result in tragic or comic situations (Zollner, 2002; Fonseca da Silva, 2003) has attracted many teachers to devote some time to the study of this phenomenon.

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<sup>20</sup> For further information concerning the teaching of false friends in the EFL classroom, see Chacón Beltrán (2006: 236-241).

From a pedagogical point of view, false friends are seen as “word associations between the language to be learned and another language (often the native language) that are misleading, cause errors and thus not desired” (Wagner, 2004: 1). They are regarded as a learning problem that requires special consideration within the academic context of the classroom (Frutos Martínez, 2001; Rollings, 2001; Kurghinyán, 2003; Wagner, 2004; Chacón Beltrán, 2006). Besides, false friends are more abundant than we would like to (Gutknecht, 2003). Thus there is an urge to foresee and solve this problem. Several language experts, such as Lengeling (1996) or Zollner (2002) give some indications on how to approach these words in EFL contexts in order to help language learners overcome these difficulties. Explicit instruction is recommended so that learners become aware of the different aspects and nuances between similar items in the second language and their own language in a conscious way. According to Chacón Beltrán, “when a language learner misunderstands a false friend, it is very improbable that s/he will realise the mistake unless negative evidence is provided by means of explicit information” (2006: 32). Instructors should help students with the use and understanding of these words because of two main reasons: (1) in terms of production, “the use of a false friend in Spanish creates a different meaning if used in English” (Lengeling, 1996:4). (2) As regards comprehension, Durán claims that language learners “must be aware of the possibility of being trapped by false friends [since they can] foul up a text’s meanings” (2004:104). These reasons explain why teachers of English should be ready to provide language learners with an understandable and precise input concerning these lexical items. Lengeling (1996:5) mentions the existence of some common vocabulary teaching practices which might be useful for an effective teaching of false friends. She encourages strategies, such as *explaining* “how these words are different and what the correct word is for the corresponding word in the target language,” *collecting* “those FF that cause problems and incorporate their teaching in the classroom” and *recycling* those problematic items from time to time. In the same line, O’Neill and Casanovas (1997:113) suggest that teachers should encourage students to compile their own lists of false friends, collected from analyses of their own work and their reading/listening activities. In addition to this, Zollner suggests using humorous role-plays, word games and different types of authentic materials (brochures, instructions, etc) “for the purpose of discovering false friends and correcting the errors by translating them properly” (2002:10). Course projects which require the use of these words might be suitable for learners at more advanced levels as well. As

O'Neill and Casanovas (1997) show, although intermediate students are more likely to have problems with FF than advanced students, there is a need of teaching FF at all levels of linguistic instruction. Apart from the teachers' support, it is important to provide students with tools that they can use on their own as is the case of dictionaries of false friends. This is exactly the focus of the following section.

#### *2.2.4. False Friends and Lexicographical Studies*

The repercussion and abundance of false friends have led many lexicographers and casual FF enthusiasts to create monographs and dictionaries which deal exclusively with false friends. The fact that formally identical and similar words in different languages do not necessarily overlap semantically “has inspired linguists to scrutinise the vocabularies of different languages with an eye to identifying false cognates and then provide a lexical description of their form and meaning in dictionaries” (Szpila, 2005:74). Thus, the variety of resources and dictionaries at our disposal is a clear proof that false friends have received due lexicographic attention. The first dictionary of false friends seems to be the one developed by the French lexicographer Mauvillon which dates back to 1747 (Bugueño, 2003: 105). However, our interest lies in a more modern lexicography of false friends. The current lexicography of false friends is wide in scope and covers different languages. This is due to the fact that false friends are found among many different language pairs belonging to either related or non-related linguistic families. As a matter of fact, we can find false friends among German-Polish, Spanish-Maltese, French-Russian, English-Turkish, Spanish-French, English-German, French-Italian, or English-Dutch and many other languages. Thus, this crosslinguistic phenomenon became the object of study for many lexicographers who finally took the decision of making specialised dictionaries. These specialised dictionaries would allow foreign language learners and language professionals to notice and apprehend the semantic divergence of these words in the source language and in the target language. It is worth remarking here two important attempts at collecting false friends between English and other languages, such as Robert Hill's dictionary (1982), which is the first and the most-well known dictionary of false friends covering fourteen languages, and *The Cambridge International Dictionary of English* edited by Paul Procter (1995) which contains tags that inform users of English false friends and lists of these lexical items.



Hill's *Dictionary of False Friends* is a classic in the study of false friends. It can be considered a multilingual dictionary since it covers examples of false friends between English and many other foreign languages (Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, French, Dutch, German, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, Japanese, modern Greek, Arabic and Turkish). This dictionary consists of two parts. The first part contains a list of deceiving English words arranged in alphabetical order; in this part, information about the languages with which these English words are false friends is provided. For instance, SAMPLE ENTRY 1 indicates that English *comedian* is a false friend for Spanish (S), Italian (I) and French (F) learners of English. This ultimately implies that speakers of Spanish, Italian and French have a similar term in their own languages (Spanish *cómico*, Italian *comico* and French *comique*) which are not equivalent to English *comedian* (See SAMPLE ENTRY 1)

a **comedian**      ≠ an actor/actress, player      EIF

SAMPLE ENTRY 1: *Comedian* as shown in Hill's Dictionary (page 34)

The second part of this dictionary offers the actual meanings of the items introduced in the first part. (See SAMPLE ENTRY 2)

**topic** A *n* (c) a subject, e.g. of an essay or discussion

SAMPLE ENTRY 2: Sample entry of Robert Hill's dictionary (page 305)

On the other hand, the *Cambridge International Dictionary of English (CIDE)* is a monolingual learners' dictionary which contains language-specific lists of English false friends and 14 other languages. Whenever a lexical item is considered to have a false friend in one of these fourteen languages, a symbol appears in the entry. All the false friends for a particular language are grouped together and explained at a certain point. For instance, page 435 is totally devoted to registering English-Spanish false friends. Below is an item of this list, in particular, the English noun *parent* which is a false friend with Spanish *pariente* meaning "relative" or even "the hubby" in an informal context.

**parent** *n*      **pariente/a**      **relative; (infml) the hubby, the missus**

SAMPLE ENTRY 3: One item from the CIDE list of English-Spanish FF (page 435)

Hill's dictionary as well as *CIDE*'s lists of false friends represent two different examples of the lexicographical work done in relation to false friends between English

and other languages. However, the focus of this dissertation is on English and Spanish false friends. At this point, it is important to mention the *Diccionario de falsos amigos: inglés-español* by Marcial Prado (2003), the *Diccionario de falsos amigos: inglés-español* by Encarnación Postigo- Pinazo (2007) and the *Diccionario de términos equívocos* (“*falsos amigos*”) *inglés-español-inglés* by Miguel Cuenca (1987) as examples of some specialised reference works which deal with English-Spanish FF, which I will be using in the practical part of this study.

Marcial Prado’s dictionary (2001) is a bilingual tool including over 4,000 English words which are false friends with similar Spanish lexical items. As seen from SAMPLE ENTRY 4 below, the English item is taken as the head word (English *actual*); this is contrasted with the meaning and use of the Spanish counterpart (by saying “no es *actual*”). The information that the author provides for each item aims at giving a clear picture of the conceptual divergence and the pragmatic use of both items in their respective languages. The use of translational equivalency and the inclusion of the item in context make the semantic differences between the two languages more obvious.

**actual** no es *actual*, sino *real, verdadero, efectivo, concreto, auténtico, mismo* [very]; en cambio, *actual* del español traduce **present, today, current, modern, fashionable / trendy, up-to-date**. En correspondencia comercial, *el actual* se refiere a **this month**. En la misma línea, **actually** traduce *realmente, de hecho, en efecto, en realidad*, mientras que *actualmente* significa **presently, now, nowadays**. El sustantivo *actuality* se usa para *realidad*, en cambio *actualidad* es **present time, topicality, current importance**. El plural *actualidades* traduce **current events**.

**At the moment** = *en la actualidad*.

Castro has been the only Marxist head of state who actually believed in the doctrine [Harper’s, 26-3-92] = Castro ha sido el único jefe marxista de estado que en realidad creyó en esa doctrina. / The present situation is dangerous. = La situación actual es

peligrosa. / The actual thief is on the loose. = El verdadero ladrón anda suelto. / Actually it is less expensive than it looks. = En realidad es más barato de lo que parece. / His actual name is Pablo Ruiz Picasso. = Su nombre real es Pablo Ruiz Picasso. / It is a very topical subject. = Es un tema de gran actualidad. / I read the current events section. = Leo la sección de actualidades. / It happened the actual (very) week of vacation. = Ocurrió en la misma semana de vacaciones. / That reasoning sounds nice on the surface but it is actually completely wrong [L.A. Times 15-11-99]. = Ese razonamiento parece bueno en la superficie, pero de hecho está completamente equivocado. / Apparent Lesbianism in Beetle Actually May Be Ruse to Lure Males [L.A. Times, 21-10-99]. = El lesbianismo evidente de este insecto en realidad puede ser una estratagemma para seducir a los machos.

#### SAMPLE ENTRY 4: *actual* in Prado’s dictionary (page 29)

Postigo-Pinazo’s dictionary (2007) follows a similar pattern. As shown in SAMPLE ENTRY 5, it takes the English term as the headword for the entries; this headword is immediately contrasted with the Spanish similar lexical item. Then, dictionary users are given information on the various meanings of the English lexeme (in the case of the verb *notice*, the author points out nine different meanings). In the middle of the entries and in bold type, the compiler includes some examples of the word in context, which illustrate the word’s usage (e.g. *I have never noticed that picture; I noticed him in the crowd*, etc).

**notice** v. No significa 'noticiar' [**to notify, to give notice**], sino: 1, darse cuenta de; 2, advertir; 3, fijarse en; 4, notar; 5, ver; 6, reconocer; 7, prestar atención; 8, hacer una reseña; 9, avisar.// **I have never noticed that picture**: nunca me había fijado en ese cuadro. **I noticed him in the crowd**: lo vi entre la multitud; **notice the harmony of colours**: observe la armonía de colores.

SAMPLE ENTRY 5: *notice* of in Postigo Pinazo's Dictionary (page 140)

One of the main differences between these two specialised dictionaries is that Prado's dictionary analyses all the inflected forms of a word within the same entry, while Postigo-Pinazo's word book is lemmatised. Thus, there are different entries for *actual*, *actualize*, *actuality*, *actually*, or *actualities* in the latter; while in the former, the dictionary entry for *actual* gives information of their derivatives *actuality* and *actually* (see SAMPLE ENTRY 4).

**actual** adj. No significa 'actual' [**present**], sino: 1, real, verdadero/a.// **there is no actual contract** no hay contrato propiamente dicho; **those were her actual words** estas fueron sus palabras textuales.  
**actualise** v. No significa 'actualizar' [**to bring up to date, to modernise**], sino: 1, realizar; 2, describir con realismo.  
**actuality** n. No significa 'actualidad' [**present time, current events**], sino 'realidad'.  
**actually** adv. No significa 'actualmente' [**at present, now, nowadays**], sino: 1, realmente; 2, de hecho; 3, en efecto; 4, en realidad: **she is actually only a friend**: en realidad ella es sólo una amiga.  
**actualities** n. No significa 'sucesos o acontecimientos presentes' [**current events**], sino 'las condiciones o circunstancias reales'.

EXCERPT 1: Postigo Pinazo's Dictionary Extract (page 27)

These technical dictionaries share some common traits with other dictionaries. In fact, they are books of words arranged in alphabetical order and provide information on the meaning and use of these words. They are real bilingual dictionaries, but with different word coverage. In these dictionaries, lexicographers strive to show the semantic differences of similar items in two languages. For this reason, these

dictionaries provide bidirectional translations, the English term is translated into Spanish (e.g. English *actual* is Spanish *real*) and the Spanish similar term (*actual*) is rendered into English (*present*). Some of them provide the part of the speech of the lexeme under analysis (noun, adjective, adverb, verb, etc), together with other features, like register (colloquial, formal, informal) or other semantic nuances (connotative considerations), which help the non-native speaker grasp the shades of meaning and use of these items in each of the languages. The problem is that there are sometimes entangled explanations that might be confusing to the reader. One solution to this problem is the one adopted by Cuenca (1987), who distributed these deceitful word-pairs in two columns: one devoted to the description of the term in one language (with its corresponding meaning), and the other dedicated to its counterpart in the other language indicating its respective semantic description. This organisation of the entries allows for a better comparison of the meaning of these words in the two languages.

**pretend** [pri'tend]

v aparentar, fingir, simular, ex. 'He pretended ignorance' —aparentó no saber—, 'She pretended to be mad' —Se fingió loca—.

**pretender**

1 (+ *infinitivo*) try, attempt, claim, ex. 'He tried/attempted to rob me' —*pretendió robarme*— 'He claims to be rich' —*pretende ser rico*—. 2 (+ *clause*) expect, suggest, allege, ex. 'She suggests that I should write to her' —*pretende que le escriba*— 'She alleges that the car knocked her down' —*pretende, alega que el coche le atropelló*—. 3 (+ *O. Directo*) apply for (*un trabajo*) aim at (*objetivo*) court, woo (*mujer*) be after, ex. 'What are you after?' —*¿qué pretendes?*—.

**SAMPLE ENTRY 6: *pretend-pretender* in Cuenca's dictionary (page 79)**

These general traits of FF dictionaries (their contrastive nature, the examination of a very specific set of words, the bidirectional translations, the inclusion of illustrative examples) are shared by both paper and online versions of these technical word books. In fact, it seems expedient to mention some online tools for the study of English false friends, such as online "dictionaries," glossaries and blogs which deal with English false friends. Some examples are: the online dictionary created by Eloy Cuadra (available online at <<http://www.eloihr.net/falsefriends/index.php?page=diccionario>>) which collects 134 false friends between English and Spanish; and it is continuously been updated and expanded according to the users' feedback and contributions, or *My own Resources* which is a online list of alphabetically ordered false friends at <<http://www.miguelmllop.com/glos/index.php>>. This list presents a bidirectional translation of false-friend pairs between English and Spanish (e.g. English term *arena*- Spanish translation of this term *estadio*/ Spanish similar item *arena* - English equivalent *sand*). In addition to this, these lexical items have become the focus of attention of

entire blogs, as in the case of the blogs available at <<http://falsos-amigos.blogspot.com/>> and at <<http://falsecognates.blogspot.com/>>.

All these lexicographical efforts together with the studies presented in the previous sections show the wide range of different views on the subject of false friends and give us an idea of the interest and relevance of such words in different areas of language research. In this dissertation, false friends will be examined from the perspective of the language learner. One of the central aims of this study is to investigate the learners' main use and problems with false friends, their role in L2 production and L2 reception and the problems that the misuse or misunderstanding of these words may produce in real communication contexts between native speakers and learners of English.

In order to finish with the theoretical foundations of this dissertation, the next section draws attention to some relevant issues concerning L2 production and reception.

### **2.3. False Friends in L2 Production and L2 Reception**

Before going into the presentation of the two studies in this dissertation, it seems useful to make a brief review of the main characteristics behind second language comprehension and second language production processes (Ringbom, 2007). Likewise, it seems important to discuss the impact of false friends on these two processes.

First of all, it is necessary to point out that there is an important difference between L2 production and L2 reception. On the one hand, production implies *encoding*, that is, learners need to express an idea through a linguistic form (i.e. function-to-form mapping). It involves retrieving and producing the appropriate word form (Nation, 2001) to convey a particular meaning. On the other hand, in comprehension, learners receive a linguistic input which they have to interpret and assign a meaning to it (form-to-function mapping). It entails *decoding* which involves perceiving the word form and retrieving its meaning. Although reception is generally associated with a passive knowledge of the language and production is commonly connected with an active use of the language, both processes are cognitively demanding.

As regards the role of false friends, it seems obvious that the occurrence and use of false friends can be a problem in both L2 comprehension and L2 production (Laufer, 1989:10). Some authors (for example, Ringbom, 2007) support the idea that false friends are more likely to produce problems in production than in comprehension. They

argue that comprehension can be approximate (Lado, 1957: 59); there is no need to understand the whole set of words of a text but just to grasp the general meaning of it. Moreover, there are contextual cues that can facilitate the interpretation and understanding of a particular word in receptive tasks. By contrast, in production, speakers and writers should be accurate and precise in their use of the foreign language; the wrong use of a lexical item may cause problems, may hamper effective communication and may lead receivers' astray. This may be one of the reasons why second language acquisition research has given greater attention to the study of production than to the exploration of comprehension.

At any rate and although some scholars (Kelly, 1990; Ringbom, 2007) tend to understate the importance of false friends by saying that "good cognates easily outnumber the deceptive ones" (Ringbom, 2007: 75), false friends should be seen as problematic lexical items which affect the learners' competence in the L2. This is also expounded by Palmberg (1987) and, more recently, by Verspoor (2008). On the one hand, Palmberg (1987) claims that false friends can hinder L2 comprehension and they frequently do it. Apparently the problem arises from the fact that L2 learners tend to process words through their first language especially when words in the L2 resemble L1 words (Hall, 2002: 82). Then, misinterpretations are bound to occur while trying to understand L2 lexical false friends through associations with the L1 (the L1 similar word has a different meaning). As regards production, Verspoor (2008) claims that language learners occasionally use L2 words in ways that deviate from the native use of these words (L1 transfer). These lexical deviations are normally the result of the learners' "conscious plans for solving what to an individual presents itself as a problem in reaching a particular communicative goal" (Faerch and Kasper, 1983: 81). The plans and the lexical choices made do not work particularly when they involve the use of false friends. The mistaken use of false friends may then confuse native speakers of English who might not make sense of the message.

In addition to this, what research on language and cognition says is relevant to the comprehension and active use of these lexical items. Studies in this area have shown that the organisation of the L2 mental lexicon is an "essentially form-driven entity" (Singleton, 1999: 145) and that orthographic features seem to play an important role during lexical access in the L2 mental lexicon (Dijkstra and Van Heuven's Bilingual Interactive Activation, 2002; Comesaña et al., 2010). Thus, apparently, language learners establish lexical associations and semantic networks between their L1 and their

L2 (Singleton, 1999; Meara and Fitzpatrick, 2000); they tend to rely on form and make crosslinguistic associations in order to understand the meaning of unknown words (Paribakht and Wesche, 1999:209). In this case, the fact that an L2 word often activates the orthographically similar word in the L1 favours the wrong interpretation and misuse of false friends and hinders a native-like command of the L2. In this regard, learners presume that similar forms between their L1 and the L2 should have the same meanings and senses, and they may make mistakes in both reception and production. In reception, students have the tendency to assume that if the form of the word in the L2 is similar to the form of the word in the L1, the same will hold true of its meaning (Baldo, 2010) and in production, as they cannot always count on the benefit of hindsight to decide whether a L2 formally-similar word has the expected meaning in the L2 or a different one, learners take risks and make use of certain L2 words on the basis of their first language; that is, students make choices which are often based on formal criteria (Corder, 1981). These lexical decisions are sometimes motivated by the issue of *psychotypology* (Kellerman, 1983) or the connection that learners perceive between their mother tongue and the foreign language. For all these reasons, language teachers should pay attention to false friends in EFL settings and try to avoid the fossilisation of this type of vocabulary errors in the learners' receptive and productive use of the foreign language.

The present dissertation considers all these issues in the investigation of false friends and in the analysis of both reception and production.

## CHAPTER 3.

### STUDY I: ON THE USE OF FALSE FRIENDS BY SPANISH LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

#### 3.1. Justification

Most research on false friends does not offer a thorough and systematic description of the occurrence and use of these words in learner language (Selinker, 1994). Thus, most studies tend to look into classic examples of false friends frequently occurring in EFL classrooms missing important aspects, such as the frequency of the word in the L2, the degree of semantic divergence between the L1 and the L2 or the existing differences in the use of false friends in speech and writing. It is also remarkable that few scholars availed themselves of the use of corpora for the analysis of English false friends with the exception of some trailblazing studies, such as the ones by Granger (1996) and Palacios and Alonso (2005). Granger (1996) and Palacios and Alonso (2005) investigated the use of English false friends in the written production of French and Spanish learners of English with the support of two different learner corpora: *International Corpus of Learner English* (ICLE) and *Santiago University Learner of English Corpus*, respectively (SULEC). Granger analysed a 50,000 word sample and concluded that one third of the lexical errors attested in the written sample of French learners involved the misuse of false friends (e.g. *The economic objective required a **unique** currency* meaning “single, common”). Palacios and Alonso applied a different perspective and examined the frequency of 25 false friends (total false friends: *actual* vs. *actual*) in the writings of Spanish learners. They found that the frequency of these words was not very high in the corpus but still they contend that there are some mistakes which should not be ignored. Although the importance of these studies cannot be denied, there are some weaknesses which can be improved and some limitations which need to be addressed.

The present study aims at filling the niche left in previous surveys by exploring 100 high-frequency English words which are false friends with European Spanish. The selected items are high-frequency English words (with a ranked frequency between 0 and 6000) which are worth knowing and using; they are recurrently found and are



functionally practical in different English contexts. This survey looks into the learners' hands-on use of these 100 false friends in both spoken and written production with a view to drawing the boundaries of what is correct and what is not in the learners' use of false friends. Thus, three databases containing written and spoken English texts produced by Spanish learners (namely the *Santiago University Learner of English Corpus* (SULEC, hereafter), the *International Corpus of Learner English* (ICLE, henceforth) and *Louvain International Database of Spoken English Interlanguage* (LINDSEI, from now on) provided me with the indispensable data to draw conclusions on the major problem areas Spanish students need to improve. In order to perform the searches in these corpora, two different instruments, the SULEC search query and *AntConc*, were used. These two devices allowed me to select those concordance lines containing the words that I was interested in. The search output was carefully examined and examples which were not relevant for this research were discarded, the findings were sorted out and distributed into groups of correct and incorrect uses. Both accurate and inaccurate uses of false friends shed light on the learners' knowledge and control over these lexical items, which helps language professionals make decisions about the rules, patterns and issues which merit further discussion in the classroom.

In sum, the present corpus-based analysis delves into the learners' handling of false friends in both spoken and written production. It pays particular attention to the learners' problems with these words so that teachers are able to remedy this type of errors in the learners' productive use of English. In general terms, this study consists of 8 different parts or *sections*. After explaining the motivation of Study I in *section 3.1*, *section 3.2* makes reference to the main research questions that guide this study. After it, *section 3.3* is concerned with the type of students represented in the corpora, then, the research instruments used (*section 3.4*) and the procedures followed with its two main stages (*section 3.5*). Next, the quantitative and qualitative analysis of data is shown (*section 3.6*) followed by a general discussion of the findings (*section 3.7*) leading to *section 3.8*. This last section offers a general summary and the main conclusions drawn from the analysis of the aforementioned learner corpora. In any case, the content of these sections will be covered in the following pages.

### **3.2. Research Questions: Study I**

As regards the main research aims of Study I, this corpus-based survey examines the learners' use of 100 English false friends in productive processes (writing and speaking) in order to determine the students' needs regarding these lexical items, the significance of those lexical items in the English classroom and their impact on communication. As pointed out earlier in this dissertation (in the opening chapter, section 0.3.1), this study tries to provide evidence for the learners' actual use of English false friends in order to find out about the students' difficulties or lack of difficulties with these words. In case there are remarkable problems with these lexical items, I will try to pinpoint those English false friends which are most challenging for Spanish learners, the reasons for the misuse of these lexical items and the possible implications in language teaching. Thus, the main research aims of this study can be summarised into the following five questions.

- Are Spanish learners using or misusing false friends in their production? In case false friends prove to be difficult for learners in the corpora, what type of FF, total, partial or contextual false friends, are the most challenging ones for learners?
- How often do students resort to these words? what is the proportion of accurate and inaccurate uses of these lexical items? Are there any problems in the linguistic contexts surrounding FF?
- What are the reasons for the misuse of these lexical items? How could we avoid problems with FF?
- Are false friends affecting accuracy or other than that? Are there false friends which affect communication more negatively than others? Could false friends bring about real misunderstandings or communication breakdowns?
- Are there any implications for language teaching?

In order to give an answer to all these questions, there is a need to count on the support of a number of real subjects who are willing to show their use of English through their spoken and written performance.

The following section explains how participants were recruited and describes their general features very briefly.

### **3.3. Subjects/Participants**

The subjects represented in this survey were recruited in an indirect way. They had been previously asked to participate in three different research projects: two of them based at the Catholic University of Louvain (ICLE and LINDSEI) in Belgium and one at the University of Santiago de Compostela (SULEC) in Spain. Researchers at these two universities collaborated actively to involve a large number of students learning English at University level and at highschool level (in the case of SULEC) in order to compile the three different learner corpora.

The subjects who took part in these projects were Spanish and they were all studying English at the moment of the data collection process. The participants in these surveys were aware of the fact that they were contributing to the compilation of a corpus of texts that would be used for research purposes. Thus, students gave in their written compositions and permitted their conversations to be recorded by a group of researchers. These researchers were in charge of transcribing the produced texts and put them all together giving way to the three different corpora to which I will refer in the next section. Although the exact amount of participants cannot be pinpointed, we can say that over 2000 students took part in these three projects. They were students doing English Studies at the University of Santiago de Compostela, at the University Complutense de Madrid and at the University of Murcia thus covering northern, central, and southern Spain. As regards the students' level of English, learners in ICLE and LINDSEI are all classified as higher intermediate to advanced EFL learners of English, students in SULEC represent two different levels of English: intermediate and advanced. In spite of this, as can be observed from the language used by those learners, some students who are considered to have an advanced level do not have a very good command of the English language. The criterion used was an external one: the course they were in (typically university students in their third and fourth year of studies), no other objective testing methods were used to assess the participants' level of English. Consequently, some students who were in the group of advanced students appear not to have reached such an advanced level. For this reason, this variable is not considered in the present study. Therefore, this study aims at showing how learners with a certain level of English use false friends in general without considering their specific knowledge of English as a variable.

### 3.4. Research Instruments: Three Learner Corpora and Other Tools

As abovementioned, three learner corpora were used in Study I: SULEC, ICLE and LINDSEI. They provided me with basic information about how Spanish learners “handle” these lexical items in their productive use of English. There are several reasons why these three corpora were chosen: first of all, the three databases contain samples of learner language and are representative of how Spanish learners of English use English in their written and spoken production. The *Santiago University Learner of English Corpus* (SULEC) contains samples of spoken and written language produced by Spanish students of English (intermediate and advanced), these data are all together in one database; The *International Corpus of Learner English* (ICLE) and *The Louvain International Database of Spoken English Interlanguage* (LINDSEI) constitute two different databases which contain written samples of advanced students and spoken data of advanced learners, respectively. The amount of data provided by only one of these corpora was not enough to reach trustworthy conclusions which may be generalised to a whole group of learners. It is quite obvious that the more examples we have, the stronger and more reliable the conclusions will be. Furthermore, these corpora complement each other very well as they followed similar criteria in their design and compilation. The next two sections describe the main features of each of these corpora in more detail.

#### 3.4.1. SULEC: One Database, Two Different Datasets

The SULEC Corpus<sup>21</sup> is a project managed by Ignacio M. Palacios Martínez from the Department of English Philology at the University of Santiago de Compostela. This project was initiated in October 2002 and financed by the Galician Department of Education. It contains both spoken and written data produced by Spanish learners of English. Spoken data were collected through semi-structured interviews, short oral presentations and brief story descriptions; all of which had been recorded in audio and occasionally also in video format. The written data of the corpus is composed of argumentative essays written by students at the University of Santiago de Compostela. This is a computerised corpus which assembles around 440,000 words, a fairly

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<sup>21</sup>Information from the SULEC project website was taken from its own website at: <<http://www.usc.es/ia303/SULEC/introduction.htm>> Accessed on 18/03/2010.

representative sample of Spanish learners of English. Written and spoken English have been collected in the following proportions: the written component contains 299,707 words vs. the spoken component includes 137,660 words. It represents two levels of linguistic competence (intermediate and advanced). Although it is necessary to point out that the students' level should not be taken as a criterion for comparison here (no objective tests have been used to classify students according to different levels), the criterion used to determine the level of the writings was an external one, namely the course students were registered in (e.g. students at highschool and at the two first years of University are included in the group of intermediate students, students in the third, fourth and fifth years of University are qualified as advanced). The problem found here was that some texts labelled as "advanced" seem to be more of an intermediate level. The same applies to data from ICLE and LINDSEI.

### *3.4.2. ICLE and LINDSEI: Two Louvain-Based Databases*

The ICLE corpus<sup>22</sup> is said to be the major learner corpus project. This project was launched in 1990 by Professor Sylviane Granger at the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium. It is a computerised corpus of argumentative essays written by advanced EFL learners with widely different L1 backgrounds (14 different mother tongue backgrounds at the moment: Bulgarian, Chinese, Czech, Dutch, Finnish, Finland-Swedish, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Russian, Spanish and Swedish). The Spanish national subcorpus has 200,376 words, consisting of argumentative essays of between 500 and 1000 words written by advanced EFL learners, typically university students in their 3rd or 4th year of English studies at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. LINDSEI can be said to be the spoken counterpart of ICLE. It has been compiled under the coordination of Gaëtanelle Gilquin at the Université Catholique de Louvain. It contains oral data produced by advanced learners of English from eleven different mother tongue backgrounds, among which we find native speakers of Spanish. The Spanish subcomponent of LINDSEI contains 50 interviews, and has 118,536 words (including notation words and codes). For the compilation of this corpus, students were proposed three different tasks: a warming-up activity on a set topic (three different options: 1) an experience they have had which has taught them an important lesson; 2) a country they

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<sup>22</sup> For further information on ICLE and LINDSEI, you can visit:  
<<http://www.englund.lu.se/corpus/corpus/swicle.html>>; <<http://www.uclouvain.be/en-352660.html>>

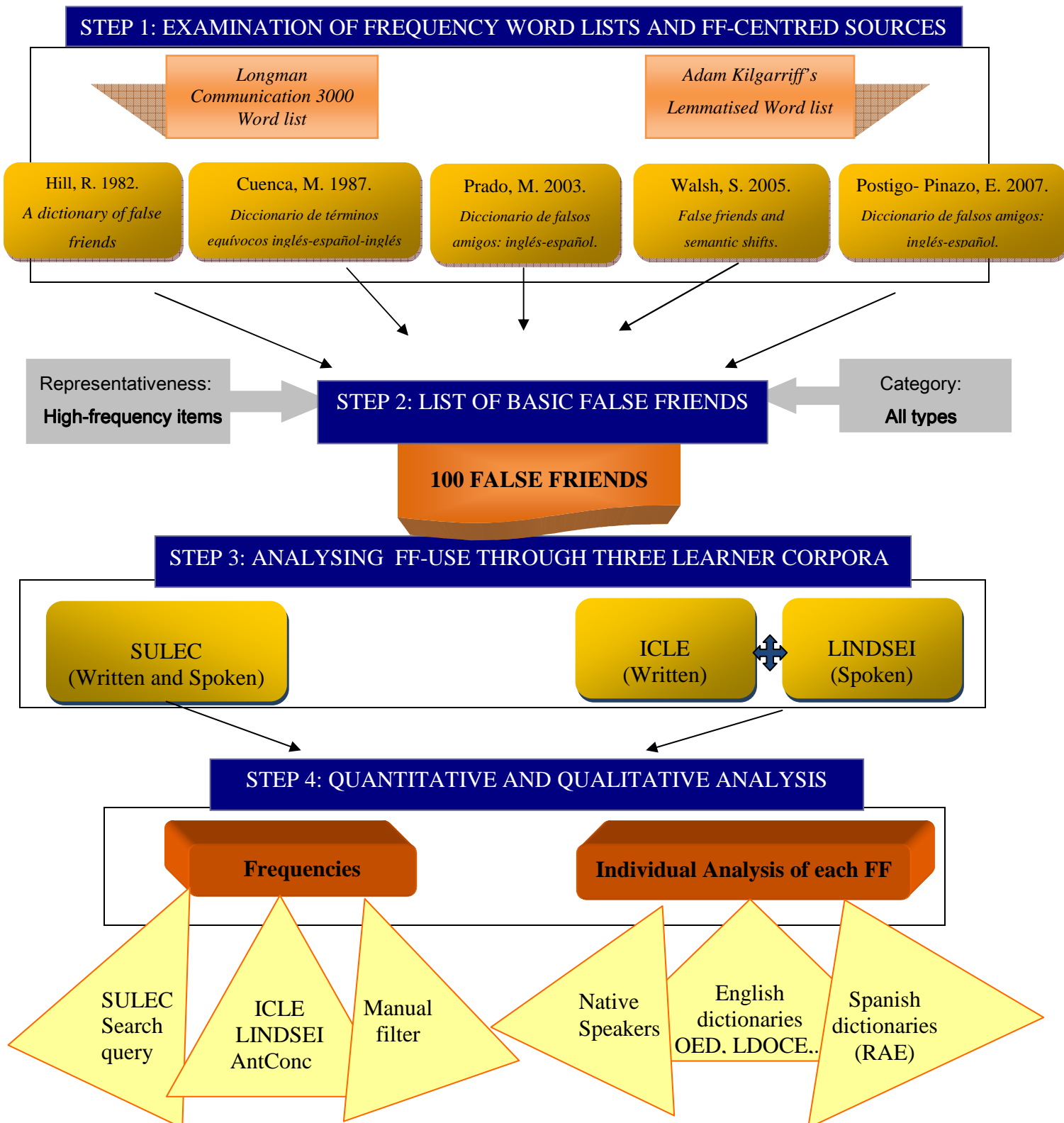
have visited which has impressed them; 3) a film/play they have seen which they thought was particularly good/bad), a free informal discussion which constitutes the core of the interview, and a picture description activity. The data were collected at two different Spanish universities: the Autonomous University of Madrid and the University of Murcia. The existence of these two high-quality databases together with the previously mentioned tool (SULEC) helped me examine real data and draw some conclusions on how Spanish learners of English use false friends in their interlanguage.

### **3.5. Procedure**

As previously suggested, in order to provide an answer to the previous research questions and in order to carry out this survey, a number of methodological decisions had to be made: firstly, it was important to delimit the object of study which involve selecting a number of false friends for analysis (100 high-frequency English words), the research instruments that would be needed in order to get enough data for the study, and the type of analysis that would be most suitable for the research. In the end, the decision was to include high-frequency English items which would be analysed with the help of three learner corpora while applying a qualitative and a quantitative analysis. Generally speaking, the study consisted of four main stages:

- 1) A selection of relevant sources, such as high-frequency word lists and books dealing with false friends, was made in the first stage in order to set a solid foundation and choose relevant lexical items.
- 2) After examining two frequency word lists and five different sources dealing with false friends, 100 high-frequency words were selected as candidates to be explored in this study.
- 3) These 100 words were examined through the three aforementioned learner corpora.
- 4) A careful analysis of each of the samples sentences containing the privileged items was made in order to find out about the learners' lacks and needs observed in the students' use of these lexical items.

Figure 10 summarises the methodological organisation of this study which will be further explained in the succeeding sections.



**FIGURE 10:** Methodological Procedure Followed in the Study I

After these preliminary notes, a more specific explanation is provided in the following sections.

### 3.5.1. Stage I: Selection of Relevant Word Lists and Resources

The main criterion for the elaboration of the list of relevant false friends between British English and European Spanish was the frequency of these items in English, together with their inclusion in authoritative sources (see Figure 10, Step 1). Therefore, in order to be selected for this study, the English items had to conform to two main conditions: on the one hand, they should be *high-frequency words* and should be listed in renowned frequency word lists (the *Longman Communication 3000 Word List* and Kilgarriff's word list); on the other hand, the selected items should be considered as examples of false friends by experts on the subject. Five reference works<sup>23</sup> by five different authors would allow me to decide what items deserve attention in this study. From the EFL teaching and learning perspective, these two criteria seemed to be useful and operative.

- On the one hand, *high-frequency words* should be regarded as important and “dangerous” for Spanish Students of English as a Foreign Language (SSEFL) due to two main reasons: a) there was a strong likelihood for students to encounter them and to use them either in conversation or in writing; and, b) the meaning of these items differs semantically or pragmatically from the students' mother tongue counterparts (e.g. *actual*, *library*, *remove*).
- On the other hand, five specialised reference works (Hill's *A dictionary of false friends*; Cuenca's *Diccionario de términos equívocos* (“*falsos amigos*”) *inglés-español-inglés*; Prado's *Diccionario de falsos amigos: inglés-español*; Walsh's *False friends and semantic shifts* and Postigo-Pinazo, *Diccionario de falsos amigos: inglés-español*) constituted reliable sources for a judicious selection of items.

After deciding on these sources, I started by examining two high-frequency English word lists in order to identify false friends in them: the word lists used were the *Longman communication 3000 Word List* and Kilgarriff's *BNC Lemmatised Word List*. The first list is contained in the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (5<sup>th</sup> edition)<sup>24</sup> which registers the 3000 most frequent words in both spoken and written

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<sup>23</sup> Four dictionaries registering false friends: Hill's *A dictionary of false friends*; Cuenca's *Diccionario de términos equívocos* (“*falsos amigos*”) *inglés-español-inglés*; Prado's *Diccionario de falsos amigos: inglés-español*; Postigo-Pinazo, *Diccionario de falsos amigos: inglés-español* and one textbook on false friends: Walsh's *False friends and semantic shifts*;

<sup>24</sup> *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (5<sup>th</sup> edition). 2009. Publisher: Longman Education. It is a dictionary for advanced learners which contain a list of the top 3,000 most frequent words in spoken and written English on which my list of false friends is based.



language. This list is based on the *390 million word-Longman Corpus Network*, a large database made up of different subcorpora,<sup>25</sup> which illustrates language use in a wide range of contexts, such as everyday conversation, lecture talk, chat shows, journals, newspapers, scientific articles. This list is claimed to represent the core of English vocabulary and, therefore, any learner recognising and using this list of words properly would be having control over 86 per cent of the English language (Longman 2009: 2044). However, 86 per cent of the total does not represent the whole vocabulary of English. This reason led me to add some other items which do not appear in this list, but which are included in Adam Kilgarriff's lemmatised word list.<sup>26</sup> Kilgarriff's frequency list is based on the *British National Corpus* (BNC). It contains 6,318 words which occur over 800 times in the 100 million-word corpus. The creation process of this list replicates the one used in the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (LDOCE) which makes it the best word list to complement the data provided by the *Longman Communication 3000 Word List*.

These word frequency lists were carefully examined in order to identify terms which are formally similar or identical in English and Spanish<sup>27</sup> (e.g. *abandon-abandonar*, *agent-agent*, *express-expresar*, *sensible-sensible*, *parent-pariente*, etc). "True cognates," that is, words which resemble in form and in meaning in both languages, were discarded. Three main types of words were finally selected:

- (1) Words that have a completely different meaning in both languages (total false friends, e.g. *diversion* vs. *diversión*; *locals* vs. *locales*);
- (2) Words that have at least one common and one different meaning in both languages (partial false friends, e.g. *urge* vs. *urgir*; *paper* vs. *papel*);
- (3) Words which mean basically the same, but occur in different contexts or registers (contextual false friends, e.g. *various* vs. *varios*):

After the identification of false friends in these two lists, the next step was to find out whether these words were mentioned as false friends in the literature on this area or

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<sup>25</sup> The Longman Corpus network consists of 5 main subcomponents: 1) The Spoken American Corpus with 5 million words. 2) The Longman Written American Corpus with 100 million- word- dynamic corpus. 3) The Longman Learners' Corpus, a computerized database with 10 million words. 4) The Longman/Lancaster Corpus with 30 million words. 5) The BNC Spoken Corpus. This information was extracted from the Pearson Longman group website at:

<<http://www.pearsonlongman.com/dictionaries/corpus/>> Accessed on January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011

<sup>26</sup> This word list can be accessed online through the author's personal website <<http://www.kilgarriff.co.uk/>>

<sup>27</sup> By formally similar, I mean those lexical items which present obvious similarities in both languages regardless language specific morphological or phonological differences (e.g. *-ed* and *-ly* are used in English for Spanish *-ad@* and *-mente*, respectively).

not. Thus, apart from the fact of being recorded in high frequency lists, the candidates were required to be well-documented examples of false friends. They should occur in specialised dictionaries and glossaries of false friends. Five sources, essential to the subject of false friends, were used to this purpose:

- (1) *A dictionary of false friends*. Robert Hill, 1982.
- (2) *Diccionario de términos equívocos (“falsos amigos”) inglés-español-inglés*. Miguel Cuenca, 1987
- (3) *Diccionario de falsos amigos: inglés-español*. Marcial Prado, 2003
- (4) *False friends and semantic shifts*. Samuel Walsh, 2005
- (5) *Diccionario de falsos amigos: inglés-español*. Encarnación Postigo- Pinazo, 2007

According to this, the selected high-frequency words which were not registered in at least four of the aforementioned sources were removed from the initial list of false friends (containing over 125 terms). This last principle was strictly followed. Hence, words, such as *ability*, *adequately*, *assume*, *client*, *confidence*, *sensitive* or *tremendous* were not included in the final list since they only occur in one, two or three of these resources. After an in-depth examination of the frequency word list and following the second criteria strictly, a final amount of 100 was found to meet the abovementioned requirements.

### 3.5.2. Stage II: Item Selection Process: List of High-frequency False Friends

One hundred false friends were selected from a total of around 12,000 possible candidates. The design of this list responded to two different purposes (Nation, 2004:3): (1) it was an attempt to determine the learners’ needs regarding high-frequency English items which are false friends with Spanish; and (2) this word list intended to have an impact on syllabus design and classroom materials.

Nominal and verbal *advise-advise*, *practice-practise* and *record-record* are listed separately and treated as different headwords<sup>28</sup> in the analysis of the results. The word count for verbal *advise*, *practice* and *record* includes the tokens of their variants with –s, –ing and –ed (e.g. advises, advising, advised; practises, practising, practised; and record, recording, recorded, respectively), but not their nominal counterparts.

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<sup>28</sup> This concept of lexical item follows the notion of headword used in the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* and in Kilgariff’s lemmatised frequency word list.

ACCOMMODATE (VB)	COLLEGE (N)	LIBRARY (N)	RARE (ADJ)
ACTUAL (ADJ)	COMMODITY (N)	LOCALS (N)	REALISE (VB)
ACTUALLY (ADV)	COMPREHENSIVE	LUXURY (N)	RECORD (N)
ADEQUATE (ADJ)	CONDUCTOR (N)	MAYOR (N)	RECORD (VB)
ADVERTISE (VB)	CONFERENCE (N)	MOLEST (VB)	REGULAR (ADJ)
ADVICE (N)	CONFIDENT	MOTORIST (N)	REMOVE (VB)
ADVISE (VB)	CRIME (N)	NOTE (N)	RESUME (VB)
ANNOUNCE (VB)	CRIMINAL	NOTICE (VB)	ROPE (N)
APPARENT (ADJ)	DISCUSSION (N)	NOTICE (N)	SENSIBLE (ADJ)
APPOINT (VB)	DIVERSION (N)	OCCURRENCE (N)	SOAP (N)
ARGUMENT (N)	EMBARRASSED	OFFENCE (N)	SOLICITOR (N)
ASSIST (VB)	ESTATE (N)	OFFICE (N)	STAMP (N)
ATTEND (VB)	EVENTUALLY(ADV)	PAPER (N)	STRANGER (N)
BALANCE (N)	EXIT (N)	PARENTS (N)	SUCCEED (VB)
BANK (N)	FABRIC (N)	PIPE (N)	SUCCESS (N)
BATTERIES (N)	FACILITIES (N)	PLATE (N)	SUPPORT (VB)
BIZARRE (ADJ)	FATAL (ADJ)	POLICY (N)	SYMPATHETIC (ADJ)
BLANK (N)	FIGURE (N)	PRACTICE (N)	SYMPATHY (N)
CAMP (N)	FILE (N)	PRACTISE (VB)	TAP (N)
CAREER (N)	FINE (ADJ)	PRESERVATIVE (N)	TOPIC (N)
CARPET (N)	FIRM (N)	PRESUME (VB)	ULTIMATE (ADJ)
CASUAL (ADJ)	FRESH (ADJ)	PRETEND (VB)	ULTIMATELY (ADV)
CASUALTY (N)	INHABITED (ADJ)	PROFESSOR (N)	URGE (V)
CHARACTER (N)	LARGE (ADJ)	QUALIFICATIONS (N)	VARIOUS (ADJ)
COLLAR (N)	LECTURE (N)	QUIET (ADJ)	VICIOUS (ADJ)

**TABLE 2:** List of False Friends under Analysis

In order to test the replicability and validity of this list of basic false friends, I made use of the vocabprofiler, a very interesting online tool which sorts out words into frequency bands<sup>29</sup> taking the *General Service List* and the *Academic Word List* as its basis. So I typed the list of basic false friends in the vocabprofiler, and the information it provides is that 57 per cent of these false friends are among the two first two thousand most frequent English words (GSL),<sup>30</sup> 19 per cent of them are in the academic word list

<sup>29</sup> VocabProfile is a free online application at <<http://www.lex tutor.ca/vp/eng/>> based on Laufer and Nation's Lexical Vocabulary Profiler (1995) which counts the number of types, tokens, word families of any text and is normally used to measure the level of English texts according to the type of lexical items it contains. It classifies words according to frequency: K1 words are those words that are among the first thousand most frequent English words, K2 for the second thousand most frequent words. The General Service List is used as a reference for K1 and K2 words, those words which are neither in K1 nor in K2 can be classified as words which belong to another highly regarded word list which is Averyl Coxhead's academic word list (AWL); there is a last category of words named "offlist" items which are those words which are not listed either in the GSL or in the AWL.

<sup>30</sup> The *General Service List* is one of the first frequency word lists which contains around 2000 headwords largely chosen on the basis of frequency. It was firstly used in books for early graded readers.

and less than a quarter of these items (24 per cent) are neither in the GSL nor in the AWL.<sup>31</sup> Below are the percentages of K1, K2, AWL and offlist items according to *vocabprofiler*.

	<u>Families</u>	<u>Types</u>	<u>Tokens</u>	<u>Percent</u>
<b>K1 Words (1-1000):</b>	23	25	<b>27</b>	<b>27.00%</b>
Function:	...	...	()	(0.00%)
Content:	...	...	(27)	(27.00%)
> Anglo-Sax =Not Greco-Lat/Fr ... Cog:	...	...	()	(0.00%)
<b>K2 Words (1001-2000):</b>	27	30	<b>30</b>	<b>30.00%</b>
> Anglo-Sax:	...	...	(7)	(7.00%)
<b>1k+2k Words</b>		<b>...</b>	<b>...</b>	<b>(57.00%)</b>
<b>AWL Words (academic):</b>	18	19	<b>19</b>	<b>19.00%</b>
> Anglo-Sax:	...	...	(1)	(1.00%)
<b>Off-List Words:</b>	23	24	<b>24</b>	<b>24.00%</b>

**TABLE 3: K1, K2, AWL and Offlist Words in our Selection**

Apart from classifying words into frequency bands, *Vocabprofiler* also makes a distinction between types, tokens and word families. This division gives us clues regarding the lexical variety of this list. The detailed analysis of these words into types, tokens, word families is illustrated in Table 4 below.

Words in text (tokens):	100
Different words (types):	98
Type-token ratio:	0.98
Tokens per type:	1.02
Lex density (content words/total)	1.00
<i>Pertaining to onlist only</i>	
Tokens:	76
Types:	74
Families:	68
Tokens per family:	1.12
Types per family:	1.09
Anglo-Sax Index:	10.53%
(A-Sax tokens + functors / onlist tokens)	
Greco-Lat/Fr-Cognate Index: (Inverse of above)	89.47%

**TABLE 4: Types, Tokens, Word Families and Etymological Aspects**

<sup>31</sup> *Coxhead's Academic Word list* (2000) contains 570 families of words frequently used in academic texts across university divisions (Humanities, Science, Commerce and Law). It is narrower in scope than the GSL and includes words which are not present in West's general English word list.

Another interesting aspect of Vocabprofiler is that it gives us information on the origin of the onlist words (Anglosaxon or Greek/ Roman). In this case, over 10 per cent of the false friends in our list are Germanic words while almost 90 per cent of the items come from Greek or Latin.

One of the drawbacks of the site is that it does not provide much information about those items that are classified as “offlist.” In any case, the fact that some false friends are offlist items in the vocabprofiler does not mean that these items are not frequent and important. In effect, most of them are frequent in spoken language such as, for instance, *batteries*, *blank*, *embarrassed*, *exit* which are within the 2,000 and 3,000 most frequent words in spoken English (s2 and s3)<sup>32</sup> according to the *Longman Communication 3000 Word List*; others are recurrent in writing, such as *preservative* (w3); some others are high-frequency terms in both spoken and written English although they are not present in either the GSL or the AWL, such as *career* (s2, w2), *professor* (s3, w3), *offence* (s3, w2), *solicitor* (s3, w2), *announce* (s2, w1), *carpet* (s3, w3); and a final group of items which belong to other frequency bands and are present in Kilgarriff’s word list based on the BNC, such as *fabric* (ranked frequency: 2786), *casual* (3819), *casualty* (3945), *mayor* (4357), *fatal* (4601), *bizarre* (5369), *luxury* (5935), *vicious* (6038), *conductor* (6171). Four other items have been added to the list although they do not appear in the aforementioned frequency lists: *diversion*, *inhabited*, *molest* and *resume*. They have been introduced for different reasons: *Diversion* is a frequently encountered noun in road signs all over English-speaking countries; *inhabited* is a special case of false friendship caused by the occurrence of a negative prefix *in*, and *molest* and *resume* are two high-frequency items in the students’ mother tongue. In fact, according to Davies’ *Frequency Dictionary of Spanish*,<sup>33</sup> *molest* is in the 2,000 most frequently used Spanish words (position: 1272), and *resume* is in position 3,041, two high-frequency terms which might shed some more light on other aspects of L2 production (e.g. the use and occurrence of these words in the interlanguage of Spanish students would indicate the presence and influence of the L1 on the production

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<sup>32</sup> Words included in the *Longman Communication 3000 word list* are followed by symbols, such as s1, s2, s3 and/or w1, w2, w3, which indicates the frequency of the items. The use of s1, s2 and s3 means that the headword is in the top 1,000, 2,000 and 3,000 most frequent words in spoken English; w1, w2, w3 are used for the 1,000, 2,000 and 3,000 most frequent words in written English. Words in Kilgarriff’s list are preceded by a number (e.g. 3819, 514, etc) which indicates the exact position of the lexical items in the list considering their frequency in the BNC.

<sup>33</sup> This dictionary provides a list of the 5,000 most frequent Spanish words. It is based on a 20-million word corpus which contains spoken, fiction and non-fiction data in equal proportions.

of the L2). In any case, Table 5 contains information on the number of families, types, tokens and offlist types and distributes the lexical items into frequency bands.

<b>1k types: [families 23: types 25 : tokens 27 ]</b>	actual, actually, appoint, bank, character, college, figure, fine, fresh, large, library, locals, motorist, note, notice (n), notice (v), office, paper, realise, record(v), record(n), sensible, stranger, succeed, success, support, various,
<b>2k types: [27:30:30]</b>	advertise, advice, advise, argument, attend, balance, camp, collar, confident, crime, criminal, discussion, firm, parents, pipe, plate, practice, practise, pretend, qualifications, quiet, rare, regular, rope, soap, stamp, sympathetic, sympathy, tap, urge,
<b>AWL types: [18:19:19]</b>	accommodate, adequate, apparent, assist, commodity, comprehensive, conference, estate, eventually, facilities, file, lecture, occurrence, policy, presume, remove, topic, ultimate, ultimately
<b>OFF types: [23:24:24 ]</b>	announce (s2, w1), batteries (s2), bizarre (5369), blank (s3), career (s2, w2), carpet (s3, w3), casual (3819), casualty (3945), conductor (6171), diversion, embarrassed (s3), exit (s3), fabric (2786), fatal (4601), inhabited, luxury (5935), mayor (4357), molest, offence (s3, w2), preservative (w3), professor (s3, w3), resume, solicitor (s3, w2), vicious (6038).

**TABLE 5:** False Friends Sorted Out by Frequency

The idea of dividing the words of the list into frequency bands might be useful for the interpretation of the results. In this way, it is possible to see if there is a relationship between the frequency of the lexical item in English and the learning process.

### *3.5.3. Stage III: Analysis through Three Learner Corpora*

After the selection of items, the abovementioned three learner corpora came into play. On the one hand, I accessed SULEC through its website and started typing the selected words one by one. Data in SULEC were scanned by using the search interface of this corpus (this database does not offer direct access to the whole body of texts in the corpus without performing a particular search). I analysed the spoken repertoire of texts

and the written stock independently in order to have two clearly distinct sets of data which allow comparison of the results in both modes of communication. The next step was to install ICLE and LINDSEI in my computer and run *AntConc 3.2.1.w.* to process the data in these two databases individually. *AntConc* is a freeware tool for corpus analysis developed by Laurence Anthony.<sup>34</sup> The concordance tool of this application generates concordance lines of any word, lemma or phrase that we introduce in the search box. It is a free, handy and simple tool which gives us the possibility of working with any text and it also allows us to see the frequency of any given word and the number of collocates for the different concordances. The sample sentences obtained were manually analysed. The process was time-consuming and it involved making decisions and careful thinking in order to obtain reliable results. The analysis was complex since it involved registering frequencies and analysing the samples qualitatively. In order to conduct a rigorous qualitative analysis, some other resources such as monolingual and bilingual dictionaries and even some native corpora and native speakers were consulted. These resources allow for a better knowledge of the meanings and uses of these English words in native contexts. They were all really useful to determine the learners' difficulties with these lexical items more precisely.

The *Oxford English Dictionary*, covering the evolution of over 600,000 words from different Englishes, together with other monolingual dictionaries (such as *Oxford Dictionaries Online*, *Cambridge Dictionaries Online*, *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*) and bilingual dictionaries (*the Spanish Dictionary Online* and *the Collins Reverso Electronic dictionary of English*) were used as reference works to examine the meaning/s of the 100 words under analysis and to find out about the actual natives' use of these lexemes. This allowed me to assess the students' use of those items more accurately. These dictionaries and materials solved some uncertainties concerning the typical use, co-texts and contexts for specific lexical items. However, it is no use denying that there were some problems I had to confront. The main difficulty was related to the ambiguous use of some false friends in vague contexts (see *crime*, pp. 147-149). On some occasions, an interpretation of the data was necessary to understand what learners meant when they used certain items. In this respect, it was also really helpful and interesting to discuss some instances with native speakers in order to see if these lexical items could be used in the same way as students use them and if they

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<sup>34</sup> AntConc and all the information about this software is available at Laurence Anthony's website: <[http://www.antlab.sci.waseda.ac.jp/antconc\\_index.html](http://www.antlab.sci.waseda.ac.jp/antconc_index.html)>

would be well understood in a natural use of English. These tools were used to have a native reference with which to contrast my non-native intuitions; in this vein, I gained support from authentic samples of native language and from native speakers of English.

#### *3.5.4. Stage IV: Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analysis*

In a fourth stage, the evidence provided by the learner corpora was explored and inspected by applying two different types of analysis: quantitative and qualitative. A mixed research methodology was chosen in order to have a comprehensive analysis of the learners' use of false friends. The qualitative analysis of learners' speech and writing was made separately in two different stages. The statistical ("top down" or deductive) results together with the qualitative ("bottom up" or inductive) approach made a good combination and allowed me to gain a full understanding of when and how Spanish learners use these false friends in their spoken and written interlanguage.

The following sections intend to give more detailed information about this two-fold analysis.

### **3.6. Data Analysis**

As previously stated, this study combines both a quantitative and a qualitative analysis. It presents numerical data and it seeks to provide a description of the students' problems through an analysis of their use of FF in the three corpora. This section first presents the findings of the quantitative analysis, and then, the qualitative data.

#### *3.6.1. Quantitative Analysis*

Data are presented separately for oral and written communication. I will first examine the data concerning written production; I will then proceed with the data regarding oral production.

##### **3.6.1.1. Quantitative Analysis of False Friends in Written Language**

As regards the written production, Table 6 (next page) shows a summary of the overall results for the learners' frequency of use of FF in written language. It presents the total



number of occurrences per false friend, together with the raw number of mistakes and correct uses in ICLE and in the written component of SULEC, and the corresponding percentages. Thus the first column labelled “frequency” shows the frequency of occurrence of the 100 items under analysis in both SULEC and ICLE, and the remaining ones indicate the number of incorrect (✖) and correct uses (✓) of those items. Finally, the two last columns show the results in percentages of accuracy and inaccuracy. Thus, if we look at the adjective *actual*, we observe that it occurs a total of 38 times in learners’ writings (as illustrated in the “frequency” column), this word is misused 35 times (as shown in the column of incorrect uses marked with ✖) and it is correctly used on 3 occasions (column marked with a ✓ symbol). This means that 92.11 per cent of the sample sentences where this word is used are incorrect in learner language (as specified in the “% of inaccuracy” column) while 7.89 per cent of them are rightly used (as observed in the “% of accuracy” column).

SULEC/ICLE (Written Language)	FREQUENCY	✖	✓	% of Inaccuracy	% of Accuracy
ACCOMODATE	1	1	0	100	0
ACTUAL	38	35	3	92,11	7,89
ACTUALLY	70	41	29	58,57	41,43
ADEQUATE	7	5	2	71,43	28,57
ADVERTISE	7	2	5	28,57	71,43
ADVICE	9	4	5	44,44	55,56
ADVISE	8	2	6	25	75
ANNOUNCE	4	2	2	50	50
APPARENT	5	0	5	0	100
APPOINT	1	1	0	100	0
ARGUMENT	64	39	25	60,94	39,06
ASSIST	7	6	1	85,71	14,29
ATTEND	37	12	25	32,43	67,57
BALANCE	20	1	19	5	95
BANK	34	1	33	2,94	97,06
BATTERIES	2	0	2	0	100
BIZARRE	3	0	3	0	100
BLANK	4	0	4	0	100
CAMP	1	0	1	0	100
CAREER	72	69	3	95,83	4,17
CARPET	3	0	3	0	100
CASUAL	2	2	0	100	0
CASUALTY	5	2	3	40	60

CHARACTER	17	9	8	52,94	47,06
COLLAR	0	0	0	0	0
COLLEGE	12	0	12	0	100
COMMODITY	2	2	0	100	0
COMPREHENSIVE	4	4	0	100	0
CONDUCTOR	0	0	0	0	0
CONFERENCE	3	2	1	66,67	33,33
CONFIDENT	6	0	6	0	100
CRIME	145	2	143	1,38	98,62
CRIMINAL	162	9	153	5,56	94,44
DISCUSSION	40	1	39	2,5	97,5
DIVERSION	0	0	0	0	0
EMBARRASSED	5	0	5	0	100
ESTATE	4	1	3	25	75
EVENTUALLY	14	1	13	7,14	92,86
EXIT	3	1	2	33,33	66,67
FABRIC	2	2	0	100	0
FACILITIES	11	7	4	63,64	36,36
FATAL	1	0	1	0	100
FIGURE	77	13	64	16,88	83,12
FILE	2	0	2	0	100
FINE	11	0	11	0	100
FIRM	7	0	7	0	100
FRESH	16	0	16	0	100
INHABITED	4	2	2	50	50
LARGE	30	14	16	46,67	53,33
LECTURE	6	4	2	66,67	33,33
LIBRARY	14	0	14	0	100
LOCAL(s)	16	16	0	100	0
LUXURY	11	0	11	0	100
MAYOR	3	1	2	33,33	66,67
MOLEST	9	9	0	100	0
MOTORIST	0	0	0	0	0
NOTE	17	15	2	88,24	11,76
NOTICE	14	12	2	85,71	14,29
NOTICE (verb)	29	1	28	3,45	96,55
OCCURRENCE	0	0	0	0	0
OFFENCE	15	1	14	6,67	93,33
OFFICE	39	0	39	0	100
PAPER(s)	71	13	58	18,31	81,69
PARENT(s)	183	0	183	0	100

PIPE	4	1	3	25	75
PLATE	0	0	0	0	0
POLICY	24	3	21	12,5	87,5
PRACTICE (noun)	253	75	178	29,64	70,36
PRACTISE (verb)	63	17	46	26,98	73,02
PRESERVATIVE	0	0	0	0	0
PRESUME	1	1	0	100	0
PRETEND	60	17	43	28,33	71,67
PROFESSOR	13	11	2	84,62	15,38
QUALIFICATION(s)	5	2	3	40	60
QUIET	12	9	3	75	25
RARE	5	2	3	40	60
REALISE	200	17	183	8,5	91,5
RECORD (noun)	6	0	6	0	100
RECORD (verb)	3	0	3	0	100
REGULAR	4	0	4	0	100
REMOVE	10	1	9	10	90
RESUME	6	6	0	100	0
ROPE	1	0	1	0	100
SENSIBLE	8	5	3	62,5	37,5
SOAP	9	0	9	0	100
SOLICITOR	0	0	0	0	0
STAMP	0	0	0	0	0
STRANGER	2	1	1	50	50
SUCCEED	6	0	6	0	100
SUCCESS	32	2	30	6,25	93,75
SUPPORT	95	28	67	29,47	70,53
SYMPATHETIC	5	0	5	0	100
SYMPATHY	10	3	7	30	70
TAP	0	0	0	0	0
TOPIC	207	1	206	0,48	99,52
ULTIMATE	2	0	2	0	100
ULTIMATELY	3	2	1	66,67	33,33
URGE	2	0	2	0	100
VARIOUS	6	2	4	33,33	66,67
VICIOUS	11	6	5	54,55	45,45
TOTAL	2477	579	1898	23,38	76,62

**TABLE 6:** Written Data (SULEC and ICLE):

Overall results: Summary of Frequencies, Inaccurate and Accurate Uses of FF

According to these data, the false friends with the highest number of occurrences (raw frequency) in the corpora are the nouns *practice* and *topic* followed by the verb *realise*. Table 7 below shows the exact figures for these words. In spite of the fact that they are really frequent in learners' writings, these words do not turn out to be really problematic for learners in terms of their semantics (learners appear to be acquainted with the meanings of these English words). However, they seem to pose more difficulties when it comes to their collocations and syntactic properties as seen in the qualitative analysis presented in *section 3.6.2.*, pp. 93. The most problematic false friend in the list of frequently-used words is the noun *career* which seems to be persistently causing problems since learners use it when they mean "university course" in 95 per cent of the cases.

SULEC/ICLE	RAW FREQUENCY	✗	✓
PRACTICE	253	75	178
TOPIC	207	1	206
REALISE	200	17	183
PARENT(s)	183	0	183
CRIMINAL	162	9	153
CRIME	145	2	143
SUPPORT	95	28	67
FIGURE	77	13	64
CAREER	72	69	3
PAPER	71	13	58

**TABLE 7:** The 10 Most Frequently Used False Friends in Written Language

In spite of the fact that there are words among the most frequently used which exhibit a high degree of inaccuracy (Table 7), none of these shows the highest percentage of semantic inaccuracy. The noun *locals*, the verbs *molest* and *resume* are leading the ranking of those words which are rarely used correctly by Spanish students of English. Table 8 illustrates these FF which are recurrently misused by language learners.

SULEC/ICLE	RAW FREQUENCY	% OF INACCURACY
LOCALS	16	100
MOLEST	9	100
RESUME	6	100
COMPREHENSIVE	4	100
CASUAL	2	100
COMMODITY	2	100
FABRIC	2	100
ACCOMODATE	1	100
APPOINT	1	100
PRESUME	1	100

**TABLE 8:** The Most Problematic False Friends in Written Language

If we draw a contrast between the items which display the highest degree of inaccuracy and those which show no degree of semantic inaccuracy, we observe that there are more items which exhibit 100 per cent of accuracy than items with 100 per cent of inaccuracy. As a matter of fact, 27 out of the 100 false friends belonging to the three possible categories of false friends (i.e. total, partial and contextual) and different parts of speech (nouns: *parents*, *carpet*, *batteries*, adjectives: *fresh*, *fine*, *sympathetic* and verbs: *record*, *urge*) are perfectly used and show no traces of the Spanish influence (see Table 9).

SULEC/ICLE	RAW FREQUENCY	% OF ACCURACY
PARENT(s)	183	100
OFFICE	39	100
FRESH	16	100
LIBRARY	14	100
COLLEGE	12	100
FINE	11	100
LUXURY	11	100
SOAP	9	100
FIRM	7	100
CONFIDENT	6	100
RECORD (noun)	6	100
SUCCEED	6	100
APPARENT	5	100
EMBARRASSED	5	100

SYMPATHETIC	5	100
BLANK	4	100
REGULAR	4	100
BIZARRE	3	100
CARPET	3	100
RECORD (verb)	3	100
BATTERIES	2	100
FILE	2	100
ULTIMATE	2	100
URGE	2	100
CAMP	1	100
FATAL	1	100
ROPE	1	100

**TABLE 9:** False Friends with No Mistakes in Written Language

It is worth noting that some of these words are quite basic and common. We have general adjectives such as *fine*, *embarrassed*, and even *fresh*, lexical items which are connected to the academic world and which seem to be widely known by students (e.g. *office*, *library*, *college* or *file*); however, there are some other which are restricted to more specific fields such as the world of business (e.g. *firm*, *record*, *urge*, *succeed*, *luxury*, *confident*, *ultimate*, *batteries*) and some items which refer to a set of different domains (e.g. the nouns *soap*, *carpet*, *camp*, *rope* or the adjectives *sympathetic*, *fatal*, *apparent*, *regular*, *bizarre*, *blank*) which are used in the correct way.

Table 6 provides us with a general overview of the students' knowledge of false friends and their use in the production of Spanish learners. To complement the previous information, it seems appropriate to break these data down into two so that it is possible to compare the results in both SULEC and ICLE and to see if there are significant differences in the results obtained in both corpora. Table 10 shows the total number of tokens per false friend in both SULEC and ICLE, together with the number of inaccurate and accurate uses in each corpus. Results in both corpora are shown separately. This allows a comparison of the frequencies and the amount of errors of the FF type found in each of these two corpora. The following table presents the 100 FF under analysis listed in columns one and five; columns two, three and four illustrate data concerning SULEC and columns six, seven and eight refer to the data found in ICLE. Columns two and six reflect the total number of tokens per false friend, columns 3 and 7 show the number of inaccurately used items (✗); finally, columns 4 and 8 show

the amount of appropriately used FF (✓). Thus, this chart shows that, for instance, the verb *announce* is found twice in SULEC and twice in ICLE; while in ICLE this word is incorrectly used, students in SULEC use this verb in the correct sense. As the results indicate some of the items do not occur in the corpora (e.g. *collar*, *conductor*, *diversion*, *motorist*, *preservative*, *solicitor*) as revealed by the raw frequency column. Nevertheless, these items will be examined in the second part of this dissertation (chapter 4).

SULEC	RAW FREQUENCY	✗	✓	ICLE	RAW FREQUENCY	✗	✓
ACCOMODATE	1	1	0	ACCOMODATE	0	0	0
ACTUAL	19	18	1	ACTUAL	19	17	2
ACTUALLY	49	31	18	ACTUALLY	21	10	11
ADEQUATE	3	3	0	ADEQUATE	4	2	2
ADVERTISE	2	1	1	ADVERTISE	5	1	4
ADVICE	5	2	3	ADVICE	4	2	2
ADVISE	7	2	5	ADVISE	1	0	1
ANNOUNCE	2	0	2	ANNOUNCE	2	2	0
APPARENT	3	0	3	APPARENT	2	0	2
APPOINT	0	0	0	APPOINT	1	1	0
ARGUMENT	56	36	20	ARGUMENT	8	3	5
ASSIST	3	3	0	ASSIST	4	3	1
ATTEND	19	5	14	ATTEND	18	7	11
BALANCE	7	0	7	BALANCE	13	1	12
BANK	22	1	21	BANK	12	0	12
BATTERIES	0	0	0	BATTERIES	2	0	2
BIZARRE	3	0	3	BIZARRE	0	0	0
BLANK	0	0	0	BLANK	4	0	4
CAMP	0	0	0	CAMP	1	0	1
CAREER	58	57	1	CAREER	14	12	2
CARPET	0	0	0	CARPET	3	0	3
CASUAL	0	0	0	CASUAL	2	2	0
CASUALTY	0	0	0	CASUALTY	5	2	3
CHARACTER	8	5	3	CHARACTER	9	4	5
COLLAR	0	0	0	COLLAR	0	0	0
COLLEGE	8	0	8	COLLEGE	4	0	4
COMMODITY	0	0	0	COMMODITY	2	2	0
COMPREHENSIVE	4	4	0	COMPREHENSIVE	0	0	0
CONDUCTOR	0	0	0	CONDUCTOR	0	0	0
CONFERENCE	3	2	1	CONFERENCE	0	0	0
CONFIDENT	2	0	2	CONFIDENT	4	0	4
CRIME	11	0	11	CRIME	134	2	132
CRIMINAL	10	7	3	CRIMINAL	152	2	150
DISCUSSION	20	0	20	DISCUSSION	20	1	19

DIVERSION	0	0	0	DIVERSION	0	0	0
EMBARRASSED	3	0	3	EMBARRASSED	2	0	2
ESTATE	3	0	3	ESTATE	1	1	0
EVENTUALLY	10	1	9	EVENTUALLY	4	0	4
EXIT	2	1	1	EXIT	1	0	1
FABRIC	2	2	0	FABRIC	0	0	0
FACILITIES	4	2	2	FACILITIES	7	5	2
FATAL	1	0	1	FATAL	0	0	0
FIGURE	12	2	10	FIGURE	65	11	54
FILE	1	0	1	FILE	1	0	1
FINE	6	0	6	FINE	5	0	5
FIRM	2	0	2	FIRM	5	0	5
FRESH	15	0	15	FRESH	1	0	1
INHABITED	1	0	1	INHABITED	3	2	1
LARGE	7	4	3	LARGE	23	10	13
LECTURE	4	3	1	LECTURE	2	1	1
LIBRARY	10	0	10	LIBRARY	4	0	4
LOCALS	16	16	0	LOCALS	0	0	0
LUXURY	4	0	4	LUXURY	7	0	7
MAYOR	3	1	2	MAYOR	0	0	0
MOLEST	9	9	0	MOLEST	0	0	0
MOTORIST	0	0	0	MOTORIST	0	0	0
NOTE (noun)	17	15	2	NOTE	0	0	0
NOTICE (noun)	10	9	1	NOTICE	4	3	1
NOTICE (verb)	10	0	10	NOTICE (verb)	19	1	18
OCCURRENCE	0	0	0	OCCURRENCE	0	0	0
OFFENCE	2	1	1	OFFENCE	13	0	13
OFFICE	30	0	30	OFFICE	9	0	9
PAPER	31	9	22	PAPER	40	4	36
PARENT(s)	142	0	142	PARENT(s)	41	0	41
PIPE	2	1	1	PIPE	2	0	2
PLATE	0	0	0	PLATE	0	0	0
POLICY	12	2	10	POLICY	12	1	11
PRACTICE (noun)	203	57	146	PRACTICE (noun)	50	18	32
PRACTISE (verb)	49	12	37	PRACTISE (verb)	14	5	9
PRESERVATIVE	0	0	0	PRESERVATIVE	0	0	0
PRESUME	0	0	0	PRESUME	1	1	0
PRETEND	10	9	1	PRETEND	50	8	42
PROFESSOR	7	5	2	PROFESSOR	6	6	0
QUALIFICATIONS	4	2	2	QUALIFICATIONS	1	0	1
QUIET	7	6	1	QUIET	5	3	2
RARE	4	1	3	RARE	1	1	0
REALISE	112	10	102	REALISE	88	7	81
RECORD (noun)	2	0	2	RECORD (noun)	4	0	4
RECORD (verb)	1	0	1	RECORD (verb)	2	0	2



REGULAR	2	0	2	REGULAR	2	0	2
REMOVE	5	1	4	REMOVE	5	0	5
RESUME	3	3	0	RESUME	3	3	0
ROPE	0	0		ROPE	1	0	1
SENSIBLE	5	3	2	SENSIBLE	3	2	1
SOAP	0	0	0	SOAP	9	0	9
SOLICITOR	0	0	0	SOLICITOR	0	0	0
STAMP	0	0	0	STAMP	0	0	0
STRANGER	1	1	0	STRANGER	1	0	1
SUCCEED	2	0	2	SUCCEED	4	0	4
SUCCESS	12	0	12	SUCCESS	20	2	18
SUPPORT (verb)	53	23	30	SUPPORT	42	5	37
SYMPATHETIC	1	0	1	SYMPATHETIC	4	0	4
SYMPATHY	2	0	2	SYMPATHY	8	3	5
TAP	0	0	0	TAP	0	0	0
TOPIC	160	0	160	TOPIC	47	1	46
ULTIMATE	1	0	1	ULTIMATE	1	0	1
ULTIMATELY	1	1	0	ULTIMATELY	2	1	1
URGE	0	0	0	URGE	2	0	2
VARIOUS	2	0	2	VARIOUS	4	2	2
VICIOUS	9	6	3	VICIOUS	2	0	2
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>TOTAL</b>	1123	183	940

**TABLE 10:** Written Language: Overall Results for SULEC and ICLE

Although an informal observation of the raw frequencies<sup>35</sup> from both corpora show that there are more examples of false friends in SULEC than in ICLE, the normalised frequencies (per 10,000 words) which take into account the total number of words of each corpus (SULEC: 299, 707 words and ICLE: 200,376 words) reveal that the number of false friends is larger in ICLE than in SULEC (56 vs. 45 per 10,000 words, respectively). Nonetheless, the percentage of errors is higher in SULEC than in ICLE (Table 11).

<sup>35</sup> Raw frequencies show the total number of counts per false friend (McEnery and Wilson, 2001). However, normalised frequencies are needed in order to compare the data in both corpora. As the written component of SULEC and ICLE consist of a different number of words (299,707 and 200,376, respectively), the raw frequencies in each corpus should be normalised on a common base (in this case, per 10,000 words). In this manner, we will obtain the proportion of false friends every 10,000 words in each corpus and any difference in the sample size is made irrelevant.

<b>SULEC</b>	<b>RAW</b>			<b>per 10,000</b>		
<b>(299,707 words)</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>✗</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>FREQ.</b>	<b>✗</b>	<b>✓</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1354</b>	<b>396</b>	<b>958</b>	<b>45,18</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>31,96</b>

<b>ICLE</b>	<b>RAW</b>			<b>per 10,000</b>		
<b>(200,376)</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>✗</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>FREQ.</b>	<b>✗</b>	<b>✓</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1123</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>940</b>	<b>56,04</b>	<b>9,13</b>	<b>46,91</b>

**TABLE 11:** False Friends in SULEC and ICLE: Normalised Frequencies (10,000 Words)

A chi-square test<sup>36</sup> based on the mean values was performed in order to assess whether there are significant differences in the number of errors found in SULEC and in ICLE. The Pearson chi-square value is  $\chi^2=36.16$ ,  $p= <.0001$  (an alpha level of 0.001 was adopted). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected; this reveals that there is a statistically significant difference in the amount of errors in both databases. These results suggest that there are more errors with false friends in lower proficiency learners (intermediate and advanced students are represented in SULEC) than in higher proficiency students (upper intermediate to advanced learners represented in ICLE).

### 3.6.1.2. Quantitative Analysis of False Friends in Spoken Language

As regards the spoken data, Table 12 below shows the overall data and results. It presents data derived from the analysis of the oral component of SULEC and the examination of LINDSEI, the spoken counterpart of ICLE. As before, the total number of occurrences of each FF, together with the proportion of inaccuracies and correct examples are specified and illustrated in a table (Table 12 below).

<b>SULEC/LINDSEI</b>	<b>RAW</b>			<b>% of</b>	<b>% of</b>
<b>(Spoken Production)</b>	<b>FREQ.</b>	<b>✗</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>Inaccuracy</b>	<b>Accuracy</b>
<b>ACCOMODATE</b>	0	0	0	0	0
<b>ACTUAL</b>	16	3	13	18,75	81,25
<b>ACTUALLY</b>	46	3	43	6,52	93,48
<b>ADEQUATE</b>	0	0	0	0	0

<sup>36</sup> The chi-square test (Cramer's V and Lambda) was calculated through *VassarStats*, a website for statistical computation created and maintained by Richard Lowry. Retrieved from: <<http://vassarstats.net/newcs.html>> Accessed on 15/03/2012.

ADVERTISE	0	0	0	0	0
ADVICE	25	0	25	0	100
ADVISE	1	0	1	0	100
ANNOUNCE	1	0	1	0	100
APPARENT	0	0	0	0	0
APPOINT	0	0	0	0	0
ARGUMENT	12	0	12	0	100
ASSIST	1	1	0	100	0
ATTEND	9	0	9	0	100
BALANCE	0	0	0	0	0
BANK	0	0	0	0	0
BATTERIES	0	0	0	0	0
BIZARRE	0	0	0	0	0
BLANK	2	0	2	0	100
CAMP	9	0	9	0	100
CAREER	15	14	1	93,33	6,67
CARPET	3	0	3	0	100
CASUAL	0	0	0	0	0
CASUALTY	0	0	0	0	0
CHARACTER	31	0	31	0	100
COLLAR	0	0	0	0	0
COLLEGE	24	1	23	4,17	95,83
COMMODITY	0	0	0	0	0
COMPREHENSIVE	0	0	0	0	0
CONDUCTOR	0	0	0	0	0
CONFERENCE	0	0	0	0	0
CONFIDENT	3	0	3	0	100
CRIME	1	0	1	0	100
CRIMINAL	0	0	0	0	0
DISCUSSION	0	0	0	0	0
DIVERSION	0	0	0	0	0
EMBARRASSED	3	0	3	0	100
ESTATE	1	1	0	100	0
EVENTUALLY	1	0	1	0	100
EXIT	0	0	0	0	0
FABRIC	0	0	0	0	0
FACILITIES	1	1	0	100	0
FATAL	0	0	0	0	0
FIGURE	9	0	9	0	100
FILE	0	0	0	0	0
FINE	16	0	16	0	100

FIRM	1	0	1	0	100
FRESH	0	0	0	0	0
INHABITED	0	0	0	0	0
LARGE	3	3	0	100	0
LECTURE	0	0	0	0	0
LIBRARY	21	7	14	33,33	66,67
LOCALS	0	0	0	0	0
LUXURY	0	0	0	0	0
MAYOR	0	0	0	0	0
MOLEST	0	0	0	0	0
MOTORIST	0	0	0	0	0
NOTE	1	0	1	0	100
NOTICE	13	0	13	0	100
NOTICE (verb)	0	0	0	0	0
OCCURRENCE	0	0	0	0	0
OFFENCE	0	0	0	0	0
OFFICE	6	0	6	0	100
PAPER	33	9	24	27,27	72,73
PARENT(s)	53	0	53	0	100
PIPE	10	10	0	100	0
PLATE	5	5	0	100	0
POLICY	0	0	0	0	0
PRACTICE (noun)	12	3	9	25,00	75,00
PRACTISE (verb)	22	2	20	9,09	90,91
PRESERVATIVE	0	0	0	0	0
PRESUME	2	1	1	50	50
PRETEND	11	5	6	45,45	54,55
PROFESSOR	7	2	5	28,57	71,43
QUALIFICATIONS	1	1	0	100	0
QUIET	17	8	9	47,06	52,94
RARE	1	1	0	100	0
REALISE	23	0	23	0	100
RECORD (noun)	0	0	0	0	0
RECORD (verb)	9	0	9	0	100
REGULAR	9	1	8	11,11	88,89
REMOVE	0	0	0	0	0
RESUME	0	0	0	0	0
ROPE	0	0	0	0	0
SENSIBLE	2	0	2	0	100
SOAP*	4	1	3	25,00	75,00
SOLICITOR	0	0	0	0	0

STAMP	2	0	2	0	100
STRANGER	5	3	2	60	40
SUCCEED	0	0	0	0	0
SUCCESS	2	0	2	0	100
SUPPORT	3	0	3	0	100
SYMPATHETIC	0	0	0	0	0
SYMPATHY	0	0	0	0	0
TAP	1	0	1	0	100
TOPIC	37	1	36	2,70	97,30
ULTIMATE	0	0	0	0	0
ULTIMATELY	0	0	0	0	0
URGE	0	0	0	0	0
VARIOUS	0	0	0	0	0
VICIOUS	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	548	89	459	16,24	83,76

**TABLE 12:** Spoken Data (SULEC and LINDSEI):

Overall Results: Frequencies, Inaccurate and Accurate Uses of FF

If we have a look at the raw frequency figures in Table 12, the 10 most popular false friends in the spoken interlanguage of Spanish learners are the following:

SULEC/LINDSEI	Tokens	✗	✓
PARENT(s)	53	0	53
ACTUALLY	46	3	43
TOPIC	37	1	36
PAPER	33	9	24
CHARACTER	31	0	31
ADVICE	25	0	25
COLLEGE	24	1	23
REALISE	23	0	23
PRACTISE (verb)	22	2	20
LIBRARY	21	7	14

**TABLE 13:** The 10 Most Frequently Used False Friends in Spoken Language

It is interesting to examine closely the false friends with the highest number of occurrences (raw frequency) in the corpora (Table 13); the top 3 are two nouns, *parents* and *topic*, and the adverb *actually*. These words are rather frequent in the learners' writings as well. Of these three, the adverb *actually* is the word which brings about the highest number of problems in learner language. Even so, it is not the most problematic

false friend for learners. None of these most frequently-used words show the highest percentage of semantic inaccuracy. The nouns *pipe* and *plate*, and the adjective *large* are the lexical items at the top of this ranking according to the data provided in our corpora. As a matter of fact, Spanish learners do not seem to know the suitable meaning and use of these English words.

SULEC/LINDSEI (Spoken Production)	RAW FREQ.	% of Inaccuracy
PIPE	10	100
PLATE	5	100
LARGE	3	100
ASSIST	1	100
ESTATE	1	100
FACILITIES	1	100
QUALIFICATIONS	1	100
RARE	1	100
CAREER	15	93,3
STRANGER	5	60

**TABLE 14:** The Most Problematic False Friends in Spoken Language

Data in Table 14 registering the most problematic false friends contrasts with data in Table 15 which displays those false friends which show no errors in learner language. Twenty-seven per cent of the high-frequency false friends show no traces of semantic transfer. The following table presents the group of false friends which are correctly used by Spanish learners of English.

SULEC/LINDSEI (Spoken Production)	RAW FREQ.	% of Accuracy
PARENT(s)	53	100
CHARACTER	31	100
ADVICE	25	100
REALISE	23	100
FINE	16	100
NOTICE (verb)	13	100
ARGUMENT	12	100
ATTEND	9	100
CAMP	9	100
FIGURE	9	100
RECORD (verb)	9	100
OFFICE	6	100

CARPET	3	100
CONFIDENT	3	100
EMBARRASSED	3	100
SUPPORT	3	100
BLANK	2	100
SENSIBLE	2	100
STAMP	2	100
SUCCESS	2	100
ADVISE	1	100
ANNOUNCE	1	100
CRIME	1	100
EVENTUALLY	1	100
FIRM	1	100
NOTE	1	100
TAP	1	100

**TABLE 15:** False Friends with No Mistakes in Spoken Language

It is worth observing that some of the false friends in Table 15 are of different types: some of them are common everyday words (e.g. *parents*, *embarrassed*) while some others are more formal (e.g. *confident*, *announce*). However, for a better analysis of the results, it seems necessary to show the results in the two spoken databases separately. Table 16 below contains the number of tokens in both corpora, together with inaccurate (✗) and accurate uses (✓).

SULEC Spoken Component	RAW FREQ.	✗	✓	LINDSEI Spoken Component of ICLE	RAW FREQ.	✗	✓
ACCOMODATE	0	0	0	ACCOMODATE	0	0	0
ACTUAL	3	2	1	ACTUAL	13	1	12
ACTUALLY	5	2	3	ACTUALLY	41	1	40
ADEQUATE	0	0	0	ADEQUATE	0	0	0
ADVERTISE	0	0	0	ADVERTISE	0	0	0
ADVICE	24	0	24	ADVICE	1	0	1
ADVISE	1	0	1	ADVISE	0	0	0
ANNOUNCE	1	0	1	ANNOUNCE	0	0	0
APPARENT	0	0	0	APPARENT	0	0	0
APPOINT	0	0	0	APPOINT	0	0	0
ARGUMENT	7	0	7	ARGUMENT	5	0	5
ASSIST	1	1	0	ASSIST	0	0	0
ATTEND	7	0	7	ATTEND	2	0	2

BALANCE	0	0	0	BALANCE	0	0	0
BANK	0	0	0	BANK	0	0	0
BATTERIES	0	0	0	BATTERIES	0	0	0
BIZARRE	0	0	0	BIZARRE	0	0	0
BLANK	2	0	2	BLANK	0	0	0
CAMP	4	0	4	CAMP	5	0	5
CAREER	5	4	1	CAREER	10	10	0
CARPET	3	0	3	CARPET	0	0	0
CASUAL	0	0	0	CASUAL	0	0	0
CASUALTY	0	0	0	CASUALTY	0	0	0
CHARACTER	15	0	15	CHARACTER	16	0	16
COLLAR	0	0	0	COLLAR	0	0	0
COLLEGE	2	1	1	COLLEGE	22	0	22
COMMODITY	0	0	0	COMMODITY	0	0	0
COMPREHENSIVE	0	0	0	COMPREHENSIVE	0	0	0
CONDUCTOR	0	0	0	CONDUCTOR	0	0	0
CONFERENCE	0	0	0	CONFERENCE	0	0	0
CONFIDENT	0	0	0	CONFIDENT	3	0	3
CRIME	0	0	0	CRIME	1	0	1
CRIMINAL	0	0	0	CRIMINAL	0	0	0
DISCUSSION	0	0	0	DISCUSSION	0	0	0
DIVERSION	0	0	0	DIVERSION	0	0	0
EMBARRASSED	1	0	1	EMBARRASSED	2	0	2
ESTATE	1	1	0	ESTATE	0	0	0
EVENTUALLY	0	0	0	EVENTUALLY	1	0	1
EXIT	0	0	0	EXIT	0	0	0
FABRIC	0	0	0	FABRIC	0	0	0
FACILITIES	0	0	0	FACILITIES	1	1	0
FATAL	0	0	0	FATAL	0	0	0
FIGURE	7	0	7	FIGURE	2	0	2
FILE	0	0	0	FILE	0	0	0
FINE	6	0	6	FINE	10	0	10
FIRM	0	0	0	FIRM	1	0	1
FRESH	0	0	0	FRESH	0	0	0
INHABITED	0	0	0	INHABITED	0	0	0
LARGE	2	2	0	LARGE	1	1	0
LECTURE	0	0	0	LECTURE	0	0	0
LIBRARY	15	7	8	LIBRARY	6	0	6
LOCALS (noun)	0	0	0	LOCALS (noun)	0	0	0
LUXURY	0	0	0	LUXURY	0	0	0
MAYOR	0	0	0	MAYOR	0	0	0



MOLEST	0	0	0	MOLEST	0	0	0
MOTORIST	0	0	0	MOTORIST	0	0	0
NOTE	0	0	0	NOTES	1	0	1
NOTICE	4	0	4	NOTICE	9	0	9
NOTICE (A)	0	0	0	NOTICE (A)	0	0	0
OCCURRENCE	0	0	0	OCCURRENCE	0	0	0
OFFENCE	0	0	0	OFFENCE	0	0	0
OFFICE	4	0	4	OFFICE	2	0	2
PAPER	28	7	21	PAPER	5	2	3
PARENT(s)	23	0	23	PARENT(s)	30	0	30
PIPE	10	10	0	PIPE	0	0	0
PLATE	5	5	0	PLATE	0	0	0
POLICY	0	0	0	POLICY	0	0	0
PRACTICE	7	2	5	PRACTICE	5	1	4
PRACTISE	14	2	12	PRACTISE	8	0	8
PRESERVATIVE	0	0	0	PRESERVATIVE	0	0	0
PRESUME	1	0	1	PRESUME	1	1	0
PRETEND	0	0	0	PRETEND	11	5	6
PROFESSOR	1	1	0	PROFESSOR	6	1	5
QUALIFICATIONS	0	0	0	QUALIFICATIONS	1	1	0
QUIET	9	4	5	QUIET	8	4	4
RARE	0	0	0	RARE	1	1	0
REALISE/-IZE	5	0	5	REALISE	18	0	18
RECORD (noun)	0	0	0	RECORD (noun)	0	0	0
RECORD (verb)	9	0	9	RECORD (verb)	0	0	0
REGULAR	7	0	7	REGULAR	2	1	1
REMOVE	0	0	0	REMOVE	0	0	0
RESUME	0	0	0	RESUME	0	0	0
ROPE	0	0	0	ROPE	0	0	0
SENSIBLE	1	0	1	SENSIBLE	1	0	1
SOAP	4	1	3	SOAP	0	0	0
SOLICITOR	0	0	0	SOLICITOR	0	0	0
STAMP	2	0	2	STAMP	0	0	0
STRANGER	1	1	0	STRANGER	4	2	2
SUCCEED	0	0	0	SUCCEED	0	0	0
SUCCESS	1	0	1	SUCCESS	1	0	1
SUPPORT	3	0	3	SUPPORT	0	0	0
SYMPATHETIC	0	0	0	SYMPATHETIC	0	0	0
SYMPATHY	0	0	0	SYMPATHY	0	0	0
TAP	1	0	1	TAP	0	0	0
TOPIC	14	1	13	TOPIC	23	0	23

ULTIMATE	0	0	0	ULTIMATE	0	0	0
ULTIMATELY	0	0	0	ULTIMATELY	0	0	0
URGE	0	0	0	URGE	0	0	0
VARIOUS	0	0	0	VARIOUS	0	0	0
VICIOUS	0	0	0	VICIOUS	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>247</b>

**TABLE 16:** Spoken Language: Overall Results for SULEC and LINDSEI

At first sight, both the raw and normalised<sup>37</sup> frequencies confirm that there are more false friends in LINDSEI than in SULEC (280 vs. 268 respectively). However, if we take into account the number of errors in each corpus, we observe that there are more mistakes per 10,000 words in the spoken interlanguage of learners in SULEC than in the spoken production of learners in LINDSEI (Table 17). This replicates the results in the analysis of written language. However, can we speak of a statistically significant difference in the number of errors found in SULEC and LINDSEI? A Pearson chi-square test was calculated and a value of  $\chi^2=6.02$ ,  $p=0.0141$  was obtained. This indicates that the differences between the two datasets are not statistically significant (the threshold alpha value has been set to 0.001 in all cases). It is not surprising that there are not significant differences in the mistakes found in the two corpora; both SULEC and LINDSEI illustrate the oral performance of advanced learners.

<b>SULEC</b>	<b>RAW FREQUENCY</b>			<b>per 10.000</b>		
137,660 words		✗	✓	<b>FREQ.</b>	✗	✓
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>19,5</b>	<b>4,1</b>	<b>15,4</b>

<b>LINDSEI</b>	<b>RAW FREQUENCY</b>			<b>per 10.000</b>		
118,536 words		✗	✓	<b>FREQ.</b>	✗	✓
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>23,6</b>	<b>2,8</b>	<b>20,8</b>

**TABLE 17:** False Friends in SULEC and LINDSEI: Normalised Frequencies  
(per 10,000 words)

<sup>37</sup> Raw frequencies are the total number of counts of a particular lexeme. Normalised frequencies allow comparison of corpora of different sizes. In order to obtain comparable results, the raw frequencies in each corpus are multiplied by 10,000 and divided by the number of words in each corpus (SULEC: 137,660 words and LINDSEI: 118,536 words).

Once I have presented the results for the quantitative analysis of both modes of expression separately, it seems appropriate to compare the figures so that we can draw general conclusions on the main differences in the use (frequency and mistakes) of false friends between spoken and written learner language (Table 18).

Written Language (500,083 words)	RAW FREQUENCY	✕	✓	per 10.000		
				FREQ.	✕	✓
TOTAL	2477	579	1898	49,53	11,58	37,95

Spoken Language (256,196 words)	RAW FREQUENCY	✕	✓	per 10.000		
				FREQ.	✕	✓
TOTAL	548	89	459	21,4	3,5	17,9

**TABLE 18:** False Friends in Written and Spoken Language (per 10,000 words)

A close look at the raw frequencies and at the normalised frequencies presented above show that there are more false friends in written than in spoken language (Table 18). In this regard, we observe that some of the 100 false friends occur in the learners' writings but not in the learners' spoken performance (e.g. *adequate, apparent, balance, casual, exit, locals, remove, policy, succeed*); and there are some words which have a considerable number of occurrences in written language but few in spoken learner language (e.g. *career, practice, realise, support* or *topic*). In contrast, there are just three words which only occur in the learners' spoken performance (e.g. *plate, stamp* and *tap*) and are not used in the learners' written language, and there are five words which are more recurrent in spoken than in written performance (*quiet, fine, college, character, camp*). The error percentage is also higher in written (23.4 per cent) than in spoken language (16.2 per cent) when we would expect to find more problems in spoken than in written language. Written language is normally more carefully planned and organised, there is a process of editing and correcting the form of expression until you get a final draft and mistakes are not normally corrected. Therefore, we should expect to find a lower proportion of mistakes in written than in spoken language. The factor triggering off this striking result is again the students' level of competence. Note that

the written subcomponent of SULEC whose results were considered in the overall results for written language, contains data from intermediate learners while only the spoken language of advanced learners is represented in the oral component of SULEC. This has clearly had an impact on the results obtained. Nonetheless, the difference in the number of errors found in spoken and in written language is not statistically significant (although it is relatively close to the edge of being statistically significant) with  $\chi^2=8.8$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.003$  (the alpha value taken as a reference is 0.001).

Now I will move on to the qualitative analysis which will complement and shed some light on the specific problems students have in the use of these words. For the presentation of the qualitative results, I will first present the data concerning the written language in both SULEC and ICLE and then, I will focus exclusively on the data regarding spoken language (SULEC and LINDSEI). As I will provide a general description of the meaning and use of each of the 100 items under analysis in this dissertation, I will present it right before making the qualitative analysis of the results. In this way, it is possible to have a clear picture of the English usage of these FF and the main points of contrast with the Spanish similar items. This prepares the ground for a better understanding of the learners' problems and provides a starting and reference point for the analysis of these false friends in learner language. It allows me to define and determine the semantic scope of these lexical items in English and to see how the students' use of these words differs from the canonical uses of these vocabulary items in English.

### *3.6.2. Qualitative Analysis*

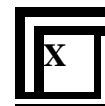
After this first summary of the quantitative data provided by the two learner corpora, the qualitative part of this study is presented and explained, an individual analysis of each of the 100 selected items will follow. Remember that the 100 false friends under analysis are the ones shown in Table 19 (next page)

ACCOMMODATE (VB)	COLLEGE (N)	LIBRARY (N)	RARE (ADJ)
ACTUAL (ADJ)	COMMODITY (N)	LOCALS (N)	REALISE (VB)
ACTUALLY (ADV)	COMPREHENSIVE	LUXURY (N)	RECORD (N)
ADEQUATE (ADJ)	CONDUCTOR (N)	MAYOR (N)	RECORD (VB)
ADVERTISE (VB)	CONFERENCE (N)	MOLEST (VB)	REGULAR (ADJ)
ADVICE (N)	CONFIDENT	MOTORIST (N)	REMOVE (VB)
ADVISE (VB)	CRIME (N)	NOTE (N)	RESUME (VB)
ANNOUNCE (VB)	CRIMINAL	NOTICE (VB)	ROPE (N)
APPARENT (ADJ)	DISCUSSION (N)	NOTICE (N)	SENSIBLE (ADJ)
APPOINT (VB)	DIVERSION (N)	OCCURRENCE (N)	SOAP (N)
ARGUMENT (N)	EMBARRASSED	OFFENCE (N)	SOLICITOR (N)
ASSIST (VB)	ESTATE (N)	OFFICE (N)	STAMP (N)
ATTEND (VB)	EVENTUALLY(ADV)	PAPER (N)	STRANGER (N)
BALANCE (N)	EXIT (N)	PARENTS (N)	SUCCEED (VB)
BANK (N)	FABRIC (N)	PIPE (N)	SUCCESS (N)
BATTERIES (N)	FACILITIES (N)	PLATE (N)	SUPPORT (VB)
BIZARRE (ADJ)	FATAL (ADJ)	POLICY (N)	SYMPATHETIC (ADJ)
BLANK (N)	FIGURE (N)	PRACTICE (N)	SYMPATHY (N)
CAMP (N)	FILE (N)	PRACTISE (VB)	TAP (N)
CAREER (N)	FINE (ADJ)	PRESERVATIVE (N)	TOPIC (N)
CARPET (N)	FIRM (N)	PRESUME (VB)	ULTIMATE (ADJ)
CASUAL (ADJ)	FRESH (ADJ)	PRETEND (VB)	ULTIMATELY (ADV)
CASUALTY (N)	INHABITED (ADJ)	PROFESSOR (N)	URGE (V)
CHARACTER (N)	LARGE (ADJ)	QUALIFICATIONS (N)	VARIOUS (ADJ)
COLLAR (N)	LECTURE (N)	QUIET (ADJ)	VICIOUS (ADJ)

**TABLE 19:** List of False Friends under Analysis

The presentation and explanation of the different false friends is organised as follows:

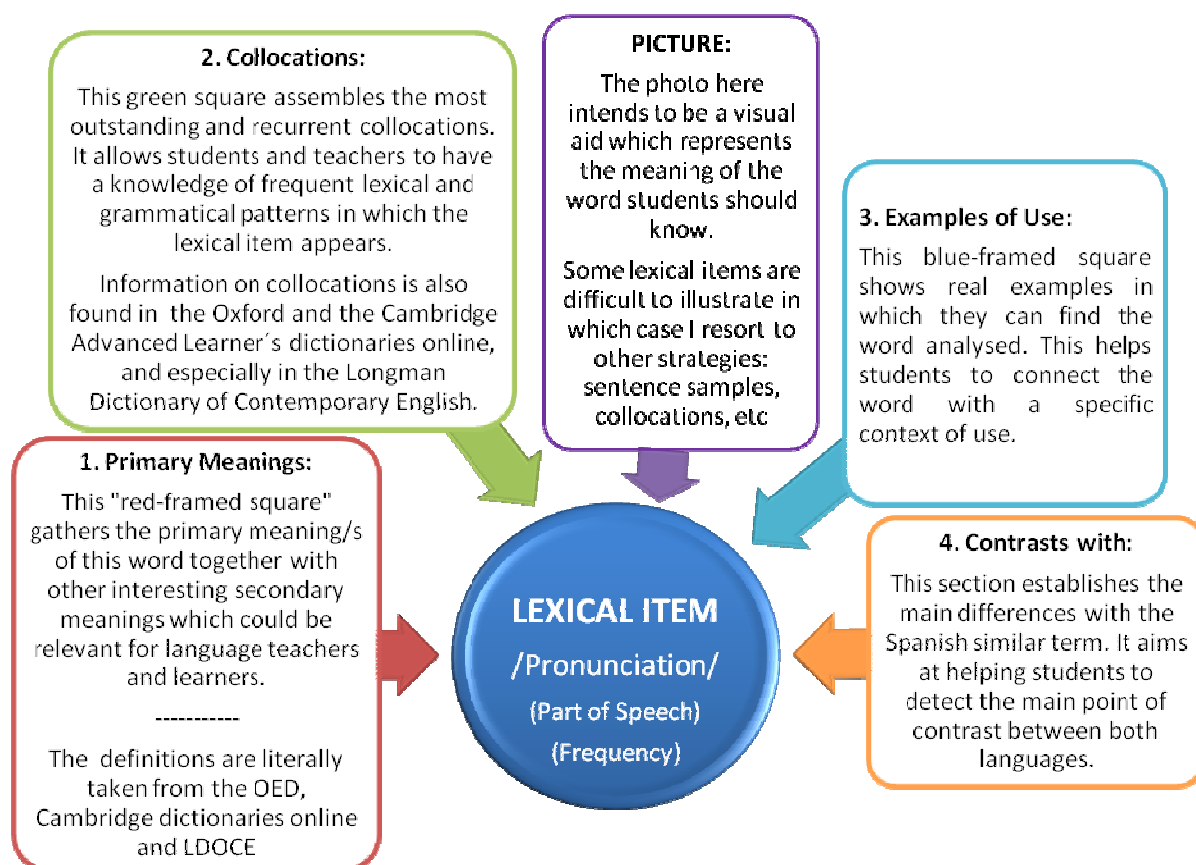
- \* **ORDER OF THE ITEMS:** The items will appear in alphabetical order. A square on the left or on the right will indicate the initial letter of the analysed units.



- \* **MARKING LEXICAL ENTRIES:** An arrow end (►) is used to mark the lexical entry under analysis. The headword is in upper case.
- \* **WORD ETYMOLOGY:** Some notes on the origin of the headword (based on data from the *OED*) will follow the entries.

- \* **PRESENTING THE FALSE FRIEND PAIRS:** The British member of the pair will be italicised and in bold type (***actual***) and the Spanish element will be just in italics (*actual*). Inverted commas “...” will be used to refer to the senses or possible meanings of the items.

After that, a flower-like diagram is used to illustrate the main features of the 100 English items under analysis. Thus anybody can have a reference of the natural and typical use of these items in English and its main point of contrast with the Spanish similar word.



- \* **PRIMARY MEANINGS, COLLOCATIONS, USAGE:** In the flower-like diagram consisting of 5 petals or branches, I will then make a reference to the meaning<sup>38</sup> and use of these lemmas in a native English context. The information here is based on the definitions/senses and examples provided in renowned English dictionaries, such as the *Oxford English Dictionary*, *Cambridge Dictionaries online*, *Oxford Dictionaries Online for Advanced Learners* and the *Longman English Dictionary*

<sup>38</sup> The notion of **meaning** used in this dissertation refers to the denotation or the concept of any linguistic expression. It can be likened to Frege 1948's concept of "meaning as sense" or Leech 1981's "conceptual meaning."

*online*. This initial description lays the basis for the analysis of the learners' use of these words. The 5 branches diagram will show the main features of each lexical item: primary meaning/s, typical collocations, and examples of use of the English lemma. I also decided to include two interesting points: a square with a picture illustrating the word's core meaning and a last square which pinpoints the main contrast with the Spanish counterpart.

- \* **VISUAL EXPLANATION AND CONTRAST WITH SPANISH:** The diagram includes a picture that visually illustrates the main reference of the word (in the case of partial false friends, the picture captures the meaning that is not shared with the Spanish counterpart. See, for instance, the picture for *balance*) and the orange-framed square draws attention to the main semantic difference between the English term and the seemingly corresponding Spanish lexical item.
- \* **PRONUNCIATION, PART OF SPEECH, FREQUENCY:** At the heart of the flower-like diagram, a blue circle contains the word's pronunciation (following the International Phonetic Alphabet, IPA), part of speech (noun, verb, adverb, adjective, etc) and the frequency of the item considering major high-frequency word lists, such as the *Longman communication 3000* word list, Adam Kilgarriff's BNC-based frequency list, and more traditional word lists such as General Service List and the Academic Word List.
- \* **BIDIRECTIONAL TRANSLATIONS:** After the lexical description of the English term, the pair of false friends analysed will be made evident by referring to the main semantic differences in the form of a translation of the English (EN) term into Spanish (ES), and viceversa, Spanish (SP) into English (EN).  
(EN) COMPREHENSIVE= (SP) COMPLETO, EXTENSO  
(SP) COMPRENSIVO= (EN) UNDERSTANDING
- \* **SAMPLES OF LEARNER LANGUAGE AND CORPUS NOTATION:** The sample sentences extracted from the corpora will be used to judge the learners' handling of these lexical items. These sample texts are transcribed following their *original* form, that is, no remarkable changes have been introduced. These texts are presented in **bold type**, and they will be preceded by two different signs either by a tick (✓) or by a cross (✗)- this indicates whether the lexical items are correctly or incorrectly used-, and followed by a reference between two different codes:

☞ Documents in SULEC: e.g. **(SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 814)**

Between brackets, we have the name of the corpus, followed by the type of text: written (WP) or oral (SP), the students' level of English: if it is intermediate (IL) or advanced (AL) and the document number.

☞ Documents in ICLE: e.g. **<ICLE-SP-UCM-0017.5>**

The code used in ICLE is taken as a reference for the notation in this study. First, the name of the corpus (ICLE) followed by the students' native language (Spanish), the place where the corpus was collected (UCM=Universidad Complutense de Madrid) and finally, the document number.

☞ Documents in LINDSEI: e.g. **<LINDSEI\_SP017>**

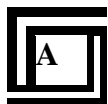
The codes used for the texts in LINDSEI respect the ones used in the original notation of the corpus. The word LINDSEI which refers to the source corpus followed by an underscore, the learners' native language (SP=Spanish) and the document number.

After these remarks, there follows an individual analysis of the 100 privileged items in alphabetical order; as aforementioned, I will first pay attention to the analysis of these lexical items in written language and then, I will proceed to the analysis of these FF in spoken language.

### 3.6.2.1. Qualitative Analysis of False Friends in Written Language

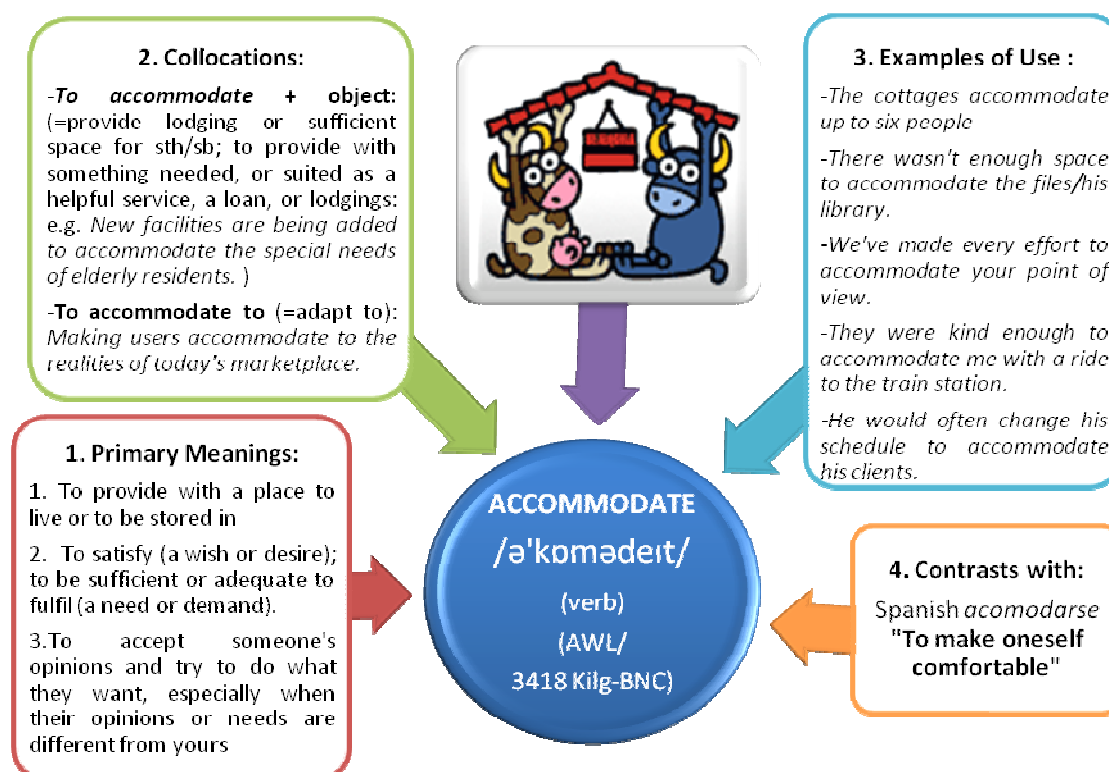
This section offers a qualitative description of the 100 false-friend candidates based on the data provided by SULEC and ICLE. The data retrieved from the corpora and the sample sentences containing these words give us an indication of the learners' use of false friends in their interlanguage, the specific problems found and the possible misunderstandings that may arise from the misuse of these terms. The analysis starts with the verb *to accommodate* and concludes with the adjective *vicious*. Each lexical entry will be immediately followed by a brief etymological explanation taken from the OED which traces the word back to its origins. After the etymology, the semantic and the pragmatic description of the lexical items are presented in the form of a flower-like diagram which provides information on the meaning and use of these words in British English. This diagram helps us see the differences of the real British usage of these words and the way Spanish learners use them. Let us start with the analysis of the items:





► **ACCOMMODATE** (verb): Origin: mid 16th century: from Latin *ad-* 'to' + *commodus* 'fitting'

The English verb **accommodate** is similar in form to the Spanish verb *acomodar* and its pronominal form *acomodarse*. Contrary to our first intuitions, the formal similarity between English **accommodate** and Spanish *acomodarse* is deceptive, the meanings of both verbs are only partially the same as shown in the diagram below.



The English word exhibits a higher degree of polysemy and, therefore, it can be applied to a wider number of different contexts. The main similarities and points of contrast between Spanish and English are illustrated in the translations that follows:

(EN) **ACCOMMODATE** = (SP) **DAR ALOJAMIENTO** (lodge up); **TENER EN CUENTA** (sb's point of view)  
(SP) **ACOMODARSE** = (EN) **SETTLE DOWN** (guest); **ADAPT TO** (to make comfortable)

If we look into the corpus data, this lexical item is not commonly used by learners. There is only one instance of this word in the *Santiago University Learner of English Corpus* (SULEC).

- × (1)<sup>39</sup> (...) you prepared **oppositions**<sup>40</sup> and if you have the luck of getting a job, you *accommodate* there and think: why am I going to continue studying if I have money, a house, a boyfriend...? (SULEC-SP-AL-DOCUMENT 134)

This example clearly shows that there is an influence of Spanish *acomodarse* (“to conform oneself/adapt to certain conditions”) on the use of this item. The learner seems to be anglicising a Spanish word in order to express the idea of “feeling comfortable” in English. It is likely that the learner uses this mechanism to compensate for his/her lack of knowledge. Thus the use of this word in the learner’s production may be the result of a general learning strategy (L1 transfer) or a case of overgeneralization of the L2 rules (e.g. if *animal* means “animal,” *accommodate* might mean “acomodar”). In this particular case, the co-text that surrounds the use of *accommodate* seems to indicate that the learner is trying out words to fill in a gap of knowledge. This hypothesis is reinforced by the presence of other “invented phrases” in the text (e.g. *laborer world* meaning “working life”) and by the anglicanisation of Spanish lexical items (e.g. *oppositions*, see footnote number 40).

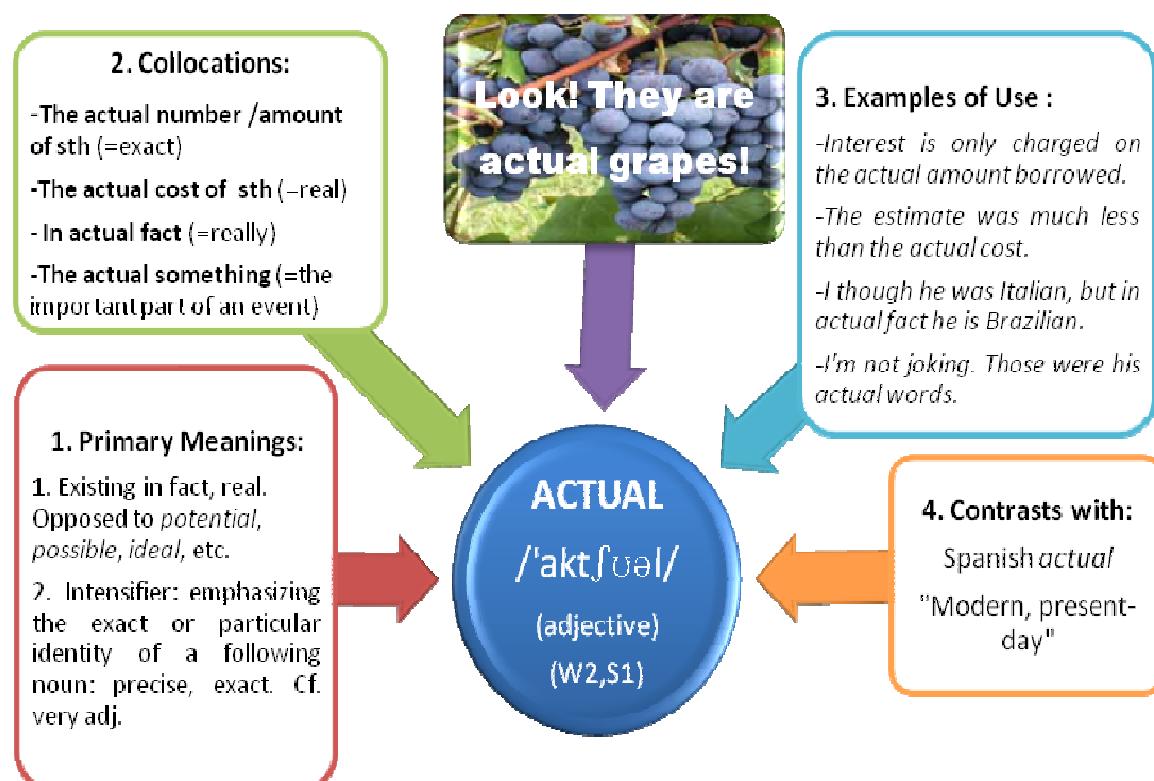
► **ACTUAL** (adjective): Origin: Middle English: from Old French *actuel* 'active, practical', from late Latin *actualis*, from *actus*

The second false friend to be examined is one of the most popular examples of this phenomenon, the orthographic false friend *actual*.

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<sup>39</sup> No changes have been introduced to keep the learners’ words and stick to the original. Errors in vocabulary, grammar and/or spelling have not been corrected. Accordingly, the transcription of the corpus samples constitutes an accurate and faithful copy of the original texts.

<sup>40</sup> From the Spanish noun “oposiciones”: competitive exams that must be passed in order to become a civil servant in Spain.



As seen in the previous diagram, the main point of contrast between Spanish and English is in the primary use of these adjectives in their respective languages:

(EN) ACTUAL = (SP) REAL, VERDADERO

(SP) ACTUAL = (EN) PRESENT-DAY

Considering the data from SULEC, English *actual* is frequently used by learners as a translation equivalent of the Spanish term *actual* (except for one example). In fact, students tend to use phrases which have a Spanish flavour. Thus, “collocations” such as *\*in the actual society*, *\*in the actual world*, *\*the actual government* appear to be literally transferred from Spanish to English. These examples are an illustration of the many problems found in the use of English *actual*.

- × (2) *Letizia (...) has studies, and she is indenpendent, (...) she is a actual woman.* <sup>41</sup> (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 112)
- × (3) *(...) our actual government is trying to modify the law to make possible homosexual marriages taking place, something I agree with.* (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 671)
- × (4) *I have chosen this option because is an actual and very interesting theme.* (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 1004)

<sup>41</sup> Spelling errors, such as *indenpendent* or grammatical and lexical errors, such as *a actual woman* remain unmodified.

In contrast to those examples in which the Spanish meaning of *actual* (in the sense of “current/ present”) is applied to the English adjective, there is an example that grasps the actual sense of the English word. This correct use of *actual* has been found in a composition written by an advanced student.

- ✓ (5) (...) people who are against this seem to be not aware of the *actual*<sup>42</sup> children needs. (SULEC-WP-AL-DOCUMENT 1311)

Data in ICLE are almost identical to those in SULEC. There are nineteen examples in which the adjective *actual* appears. Only two out of these nineteen examples show the semantic nuances of the English adjective *actual*. These data indicate that even Spanish learners with an advanced level of English do not use this English item in a correct way. Thus, noun phrases, such as \*the *actual* government, \*the *actual* law, \**actual* life, \*the *actual* moment, \*the *actual* social situation, \*the *actual* society and \*the *actual* world, instead of using *present-day* or *current*, remind us of the use of Spanish *actual*.

- \* (6) Because of this, I suppose that a good solution would be the formation of an army of professional soldiers, as we can see in other countries as U.K. or U.S.A.. This would mean a very large expent of money, but it would be a good alternative to our *actual* system of military service. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0016.3>
- \* (7) The *actual* prison system should be renovated in all civilised society because of the problems found in the prisons. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0049.3>
- \* (8) *Actual* society is extremely violent, television has undoubtly influenced in this increase of violence.<ICLE-SP-UCM-0005.5>

It is quite surprising to find that only three examples out of thirty-eight instances show an appropriate use of this word. These three cases appear in texts written by students with an advanced level of English.

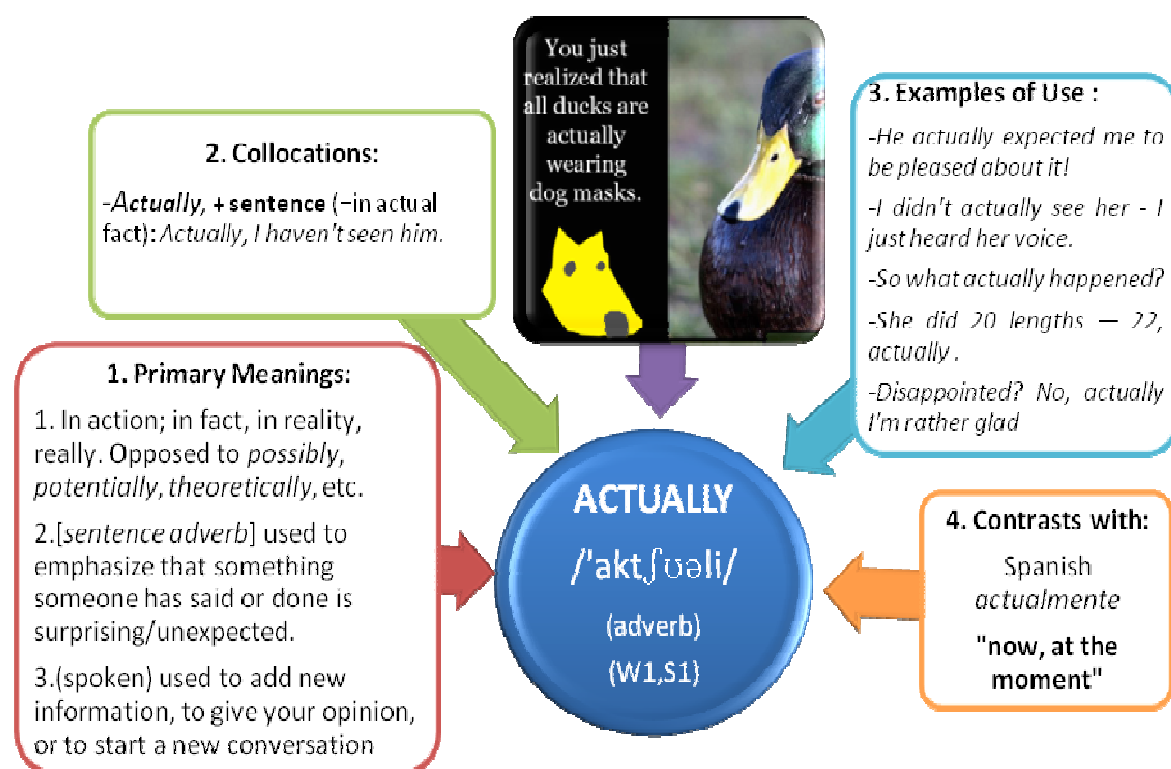
► **ACTUALLY** (adverb): Origin: < *actual* (from Old French *actuel* 'active, practical', from late Latin *actualis*, from *actus*)+ *ly* suffix (Now somewhat *colloq.*)

*Actually* is also a well-documented example in the literature of false friends. This lexical item is a false friend between English and many different European languages,

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<sup>42</sup> The collocation *actual needs* is perfectly acceptable in English. Although the context in which it is used could be rephrased in a different way to sound more natural in English, the semantics of *actual* is respected in this collocation. That is the reason why I marked it with a tick.

such as German, French or Italian. The English meaning, its typical collocations and some examples of use are shown in the diagram below.



The semantic domain of this word is different from its similar counterpart in Spanish, *actualmente* which, in essence, means “currently.”

(EN) ACTUALLY = (SP) REALMENTE

(SP) ACTUALMENTE = (EN) CURRENTLY

As regards the data in the corpora, the use of *actually* appears to be not so problematic as the misuse of the corresponding adjective *actual* (previously analysed). The influence of the Spanish adverb *actualmente* is not so evident here. This may be due to the fact that both *actually* and *actualmente* can be used in initial position as sentential adverbs. In most of the sample sentences found both in SULEC and ICLE, *actually* is used to add new information to what has been previously said. It is likely that any Spanish speaker could perceive the implicit meaning of “nowadays” in the students’ use of this word. However, this is not clear and the semantic influence of Spanish on the use of this English word does not hinder the understanding of the message; therefore, utterances

such as 9 and 10 are regarded as correct because they make sense to any English person, and they are felicitous in terms of their structure.

- ✓ (9) **Facing the difficulties of our society is not exactly easy, but universities and schools could do much more than they *actually* do to help students, although it is difficult task because not everybody agrees to listen to advice. (SULEC-WP- AL-Document 234)**
- ✓ (10) **Future generations will suffer the consequences of this relationship between television and the disintegration of the family. Recent surveys in Great Britain indicate that very young children *actually* spend with their parents less than ten minutes per day, which is, undoubtedly, a chilling average (...) <ICLE-SP-UCM-0022.5>**

Concerning the data in SULEC, the adverb *actually* is persistently misused. Some students use it as an adjective and the phrase **\*in the actually** is commonly found. Apart from being inaccurate, this use, which is basically found in the writings of intermediate students, may interfere in the actual understanding of the utterance. So it has been included in the column of wrong uses.

- ✗ (11) **The *actually* university entrance examination is for me a shocking idea invented by the political party that govern Spain. (SULEC-WP-IL-615)**
- ✗ (12) **In the *actually* there are very places which you can not smoke. (SULEC-WP-IL-275)**

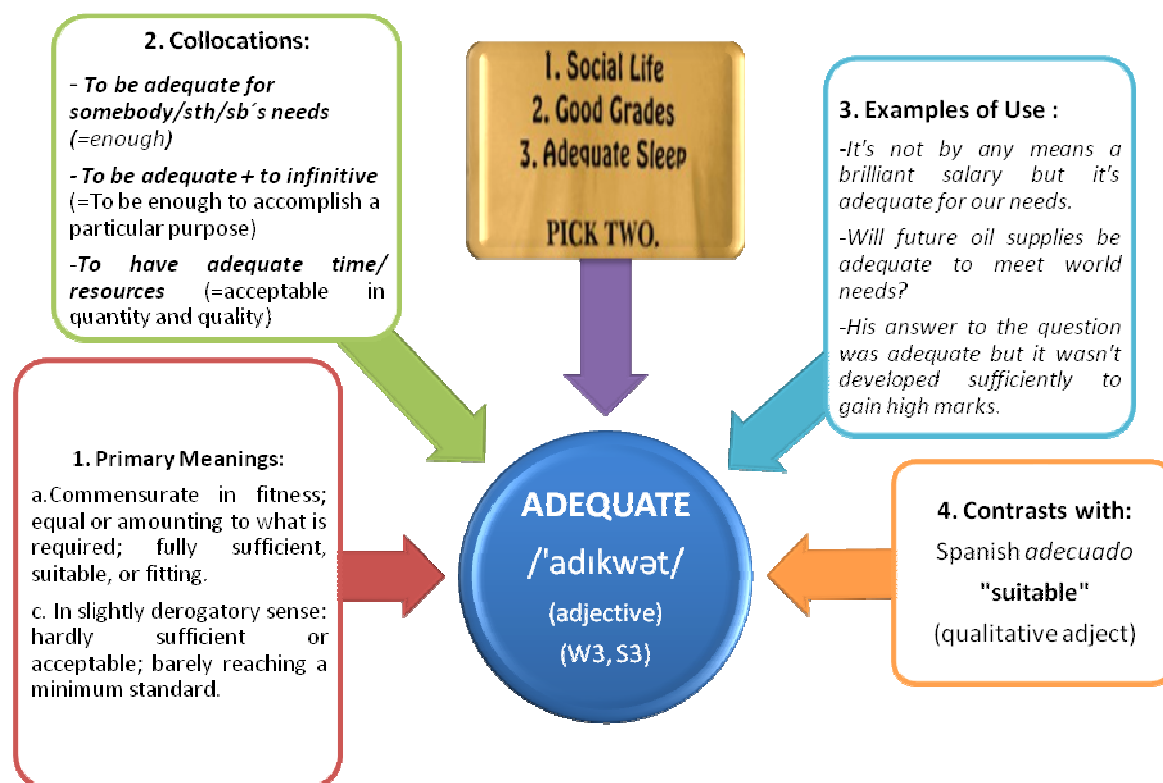
Examples in which this sentence adverb is coordinated with “nowadays” are frequent and are considered to be incorrect since the semantic interference is clear.

- ✗ (13) **What would feel a children who has two mothers or two fathers? Is it a normal situation? The modern people, *actually* or nowadays, understand so so the situation and there is some judicial weeddings. (SULEC-WP-IL-1054)**

Coordinations of this type occur in sample sentences written by students with a poor level of English. At a more advanced stage, this mistake is not observed.

► **ADEQUATE** (adjective): Origin: early 17th century: from Latin *adaequatus* 'made equal to', past participle of the verb *adaequare*, from *ad-* 'to' + *aequus* 'equal'

This English adjective makes reference to a quantitative issue rather than to a qualitative issue, which constitutes the main point of contrast with Spanish *adecuado* as shown in the following figure.



In any case, the most straightforward translations of these two adjectives clearly reflect the denotations and connotations of these adjectives in both languages:

(EN) ADEQUATE = (SP) SUFICIENTE

(SP) ADECUADO = (EN) SUITABLE

English *adequate* means “sufficient, enough” which shows partial semantic overlap with the Spanish similar adjective *adecuado*. However, the typical collocations for both adjectives differ quite a lot in the two languages. In addition to this, the English adjective has a negative connotation while the Spanish word is devoid of any negative sense. For this reason, it is difficult to classify this false friend pair. It is half partial, half contextual. In any case, the adjective *adequate* seems to be difficult for Spanish learners of English; in fact, learners use this adjective as if it were a synonym of appropriate or suitable. The confusion might arise from the fact that students think that *adequate* is a Latin-based doublet of the English adjective *suitable*. In these examples, the collocations used sound odd.

- \* (14) What subjects should be omitted so as to include practice lessons? This would become a very difficult task that perhaps would be continuously going round in circles and that would never find an *adequate* solution. (SULEC-WP-AL-Document 139)

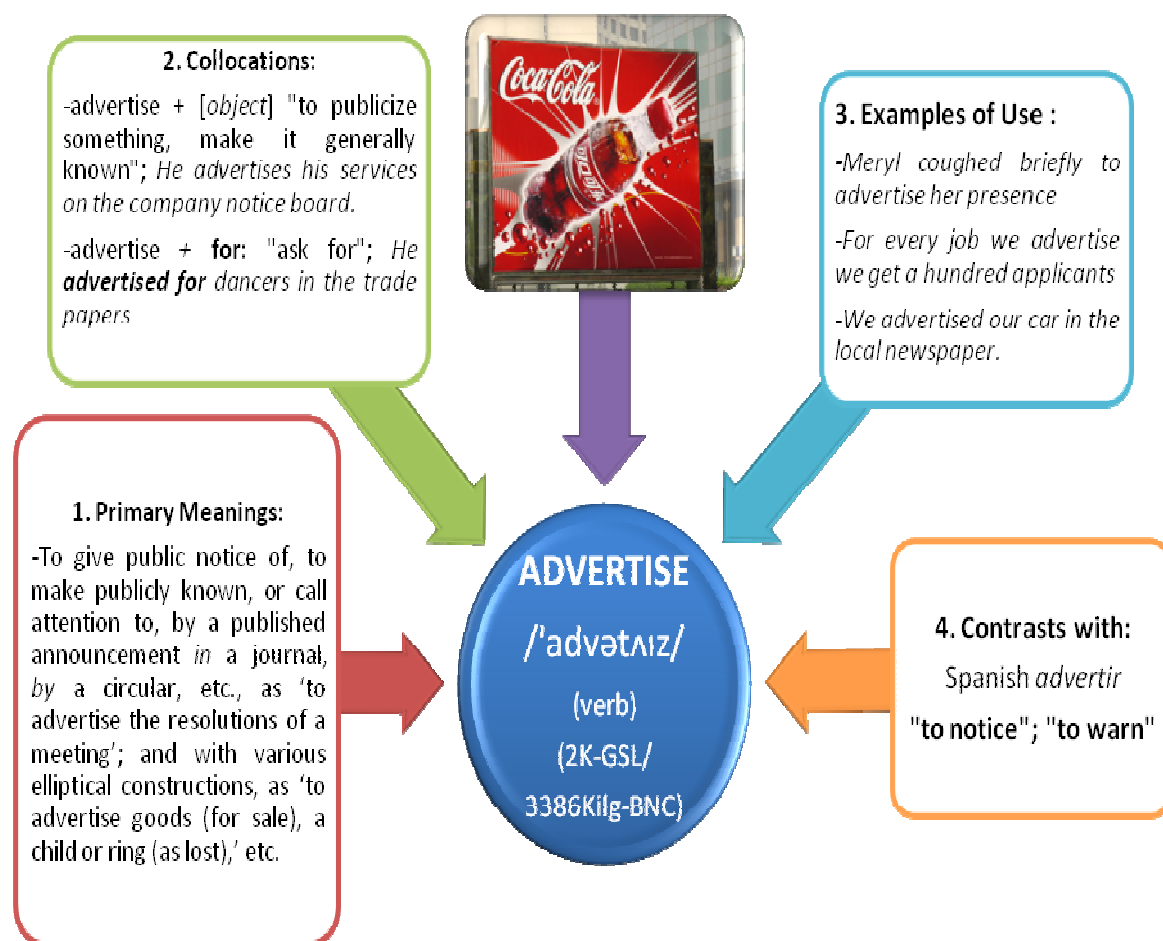
- × (15) (...) the election of a husband (...), that is, (...) a "marriage of convenience": the father who finds an *adequate* husband for her daughter <ICLE-SP-UCM-0012.6>

In contrast to these inaccurate use of *adequate* with the meaning of "suitable," there are other examples which could be regarded as showing an appropriate use of this adjective.

- ✓ (16) When someone acts in a way that deliberately hurts a person's feelings and dignity, the law can only objectify the moral harm done, but the amend made for it is never *adequate* to the person's esteem of himself (...).<ICLE-SP-UCM-0027.3>

► **ADVERTISE** (verb): Origin: late Middle English: from Old French *advertiss-*, lengthened stem of *advertir*, from Latin *advertere* "turn towards."

*Advertise* is the next item to be examined which presents an obvious formal similarity with Spanish *advertir*. However, these two lexical items do not refer exactly to the same actions.





In spite of the existing formal similarities between *advertise* and *advertir*, there are conspicuous semantic differences:

(EN) ADVERTISE = (SP) ANUNCIAR

(SP) ADVERTIR = (EN) WARN

Learners seem to ignore the differences between these items as seen in both SULEC and ICLE. In examples 17 and 18 below, the verb *to advertise* is used in very much the same way as the Spanish verb *advertir* “warn.”

- × (17) Smoke is bad for the health and many organizations and a lot of doctors *advertise* these problem. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 651)
- × (18) I ought to *advertise* that this majority civic opinion opposite neither the constitutional spirit nor the conception about the tax collector motive of the punishment, because it is proved that the majority of the released from jail backslide again, which demonstrates the reeducation falsehood. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0018.4>

By contrast, an accurate use of the word is found in document 802 from SULEC (example 19). The linguistic form *advertise* has the connotation a native speaker of English would give (“announce a product in order to induce people to buy it”):

- ✓ (19) All of the world is against the tobacco, because governments don’t allow to *advertise* tobacco products on the television or in magazines and tobacco companies are crazy to publish their products to sell more. (SULEC-WP-AL-DOCUMENT 802).

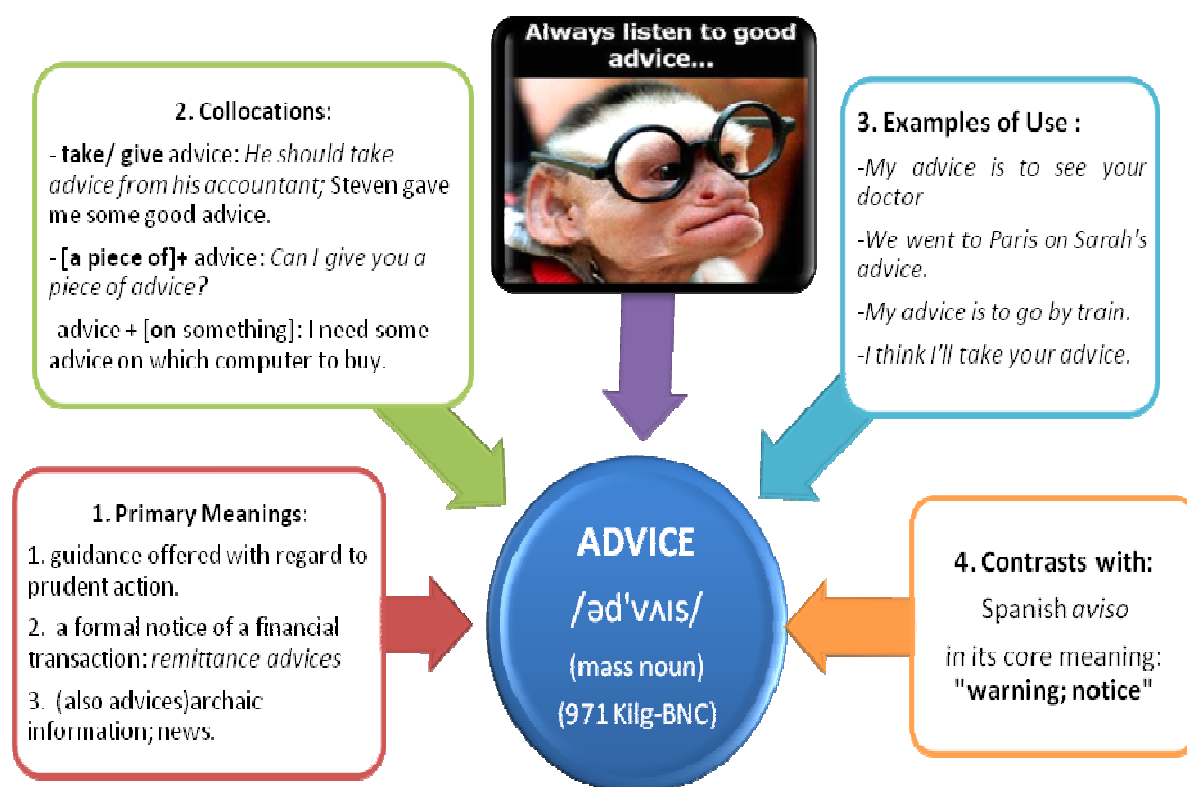
In ICLE, the inflection *-ed* is frequently appended to the root of the verb to form the past or past participle forms of the verb; these inflected forms are also present in our analysis. We examined cases like:

- ✓ (20) Most of the products which are *advertised* are out of our possibilities; as a result, the human ambition grows. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0012.5>
- ✓ (21) The clothes: If you want to be in fashion you will dress the clothes which are *advertised* on television; there are fashion shows every day. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0018.7>

Despite of the low frequency of occurrence of this word, it is observed that all students and even those with an advanced level of English have some difficulties when it comes to the use of this verb.

► **ADVICE** (noun): Origin: Middle English: from Old French *avis*, based on Latin *ad* 'to' + *visum*, past participle of *videre* 'to see'.

English **advice** is a mass noun whose meaning is “counsel.” Although the orthographic resemblance between **advice** and *aviso* is not so obvious, the phonetic form might be a factor of confusion. This word is also traditionally included in lists of false friends between English and Spanish (see, for instance, Cuenca’s dictionary or Walsh’s textbook)



**Advice** and *aviso* differ in a number of respects. The translation below illustrates it.

(EN) **ADVICE** = (SP) **CONSEJO**

(SP) **AVISO** = (EN) **NOTICE**

Data from both corpora indicate that there are difficulties both with the form and with the grammatical properties attached to this noun in learner language. One of the problems emerges from the invariable nature of this noun in English as opposed to its Spanish counterpart. Influenced by their mother tongue, Spanish students transfer the

grammatical properties of the Spanish counterpart and make the English noun plural by adding an “-s” (as shown in 22).

- ✓ (22) (...) **smoking it's a expensive poison (...) listen(...) this advices**<sup>43</sup> (SULEC-WP-AL-DOCUMENT 707)

Another remarkable problem is the students' confusion between the noun *advice* and the verbal form *advise*. Learners resort to “advice” and use it as a verb. In fact, we can find several instances of this in both corpora (see 23 and 24). However, I did not take into account these formal mistakes in the final sum of correct and incorrect uses of this noun (they are included in the analysis of the verb *advise*), what counts more is the semantic analysis of the words. The connotations behind the use of *advice* and its lexical links with modal verbs such as *must* or the phrase *\*advice us of smoking dangers* (24) are indicative of some form of semantic transfer from Spanish into English.

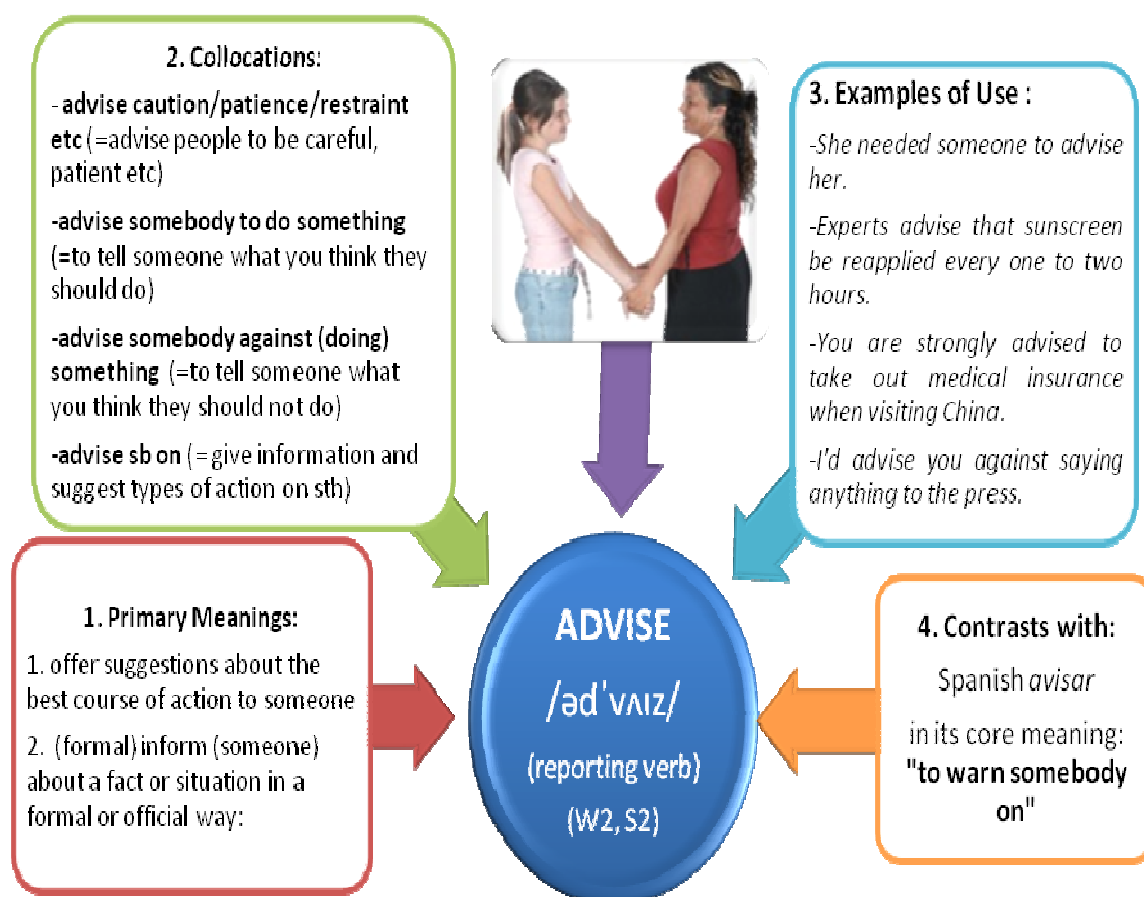
- × (23) **But not everything is against the enviroment. Some organizations like "Greenpeace", are contributing to help nature and to *advise* people of what they must do** <ICLE-SP-UCM-0031.3>
- × (24) (...) **publicity which *advise* us of smoking dangers** (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 440)

► **ADVISE** (verb): Origin: Middle English: from Old French *aviser*, based on Latin *ad-* 'to' + *visere*, frequentative of *videre* 'to see'

The verbs *advise* and *avisar* are partial false friends. The British use of *advise* resembles the general use of the Spanish verb *avisar* in formal contexts (e.g. *We'll advise you of any changes in the delivery dates*). Nonetheless, the senses and uses of these two verbs are different on most occasions. The diagram in the next page illustrates the main senses, primary collocations and examples of use of the English verb and the main sense of the Spanish verb *avisar*.

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<sup>43</sup> Although the form of this word is not correct, I marked the example as acceptable because the semantic sense of the English noun *advice* is kept by the writer.



A translation of these terms is provided below:

(EN) ADVISE = (SP) ACONSEJAR; ASESORAR; ADVERTIR

(SP) AVISAR = (EN) WARN; TELL; NOTIFY

In the case of the English verb *advise*, students do not show a problem of ascribing the wrong meaning to this word; the confusion is seen either in the spelling of the word or in the grammatical properties assigned to it (morphology: *advises*, collocations: *the advise of other people*). Similarly to what happens with the noun *advice*, learners mix up the English forms *advise* and *advice*. They do not know which spelling corresponds to the noun and which one to the verb.

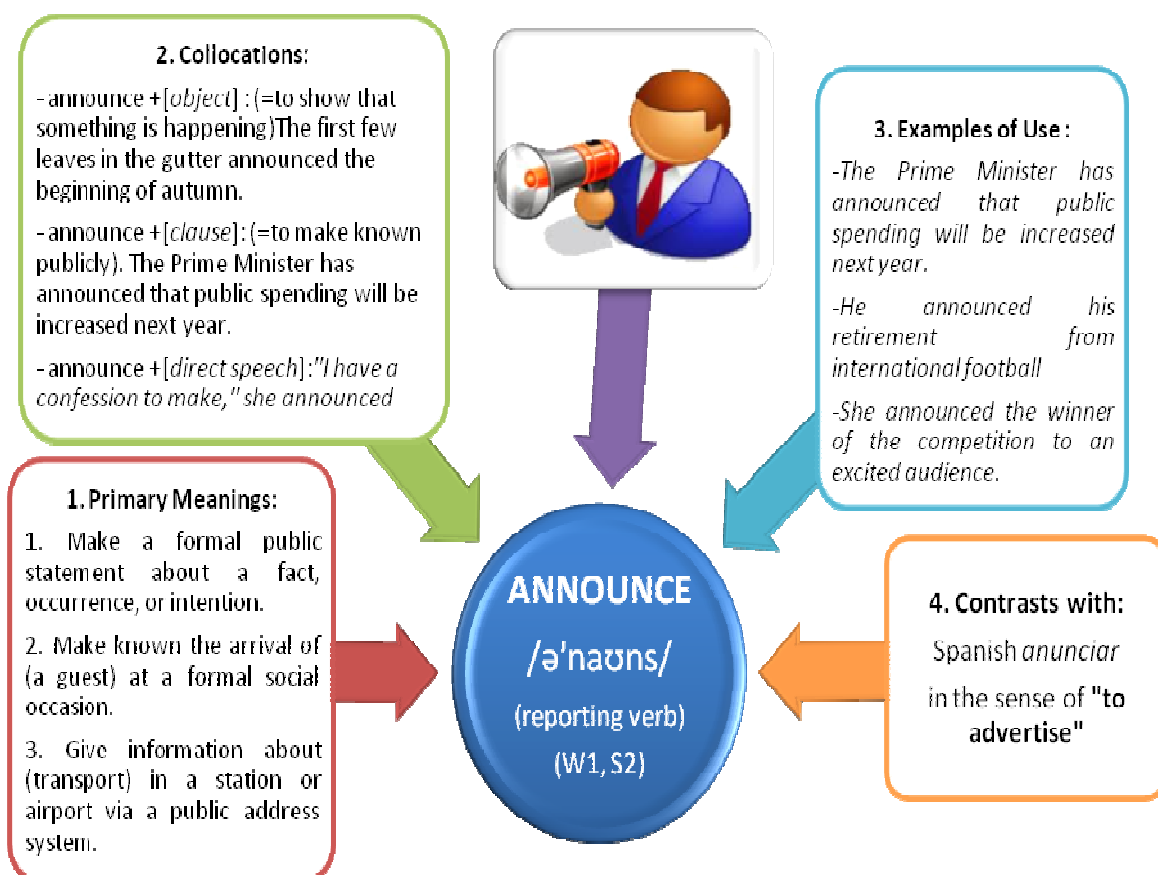
- × (25) (...) Some teachers help you giving *advices* about (...) the courses that you can do, where you can work...(SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 123)
- × (26) Smokers realise of the bad effects of tobacco because of the advertisements and the *advise* of other people. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 1017)

Nevertheless, this verb is not so difficult for learners to grasp. This might be due to the fact that the homophony and homography of these words is not so close to Spanish as in other cases. Even so, it has been observed that students have some difficulties in the grammatical patterns of this verb rather than in the semantic features of the word.

- × (27) **Young people can see adults smoking everywhere so that they think it shouldn't be a bad thing. On the other hand the Health Department is advising that more and more people are losing their lives because of smoking. They advise not to smoke but they don't take any important decision in order to make it an illegal action. (SULEC-WP-AL-DOCUMENT 1256)**

► **ANNOUNCE** (verb): Origin: late 15th century: from French *annoncer*, from Latin *annuntiare*, from *ad-* 'to' + *nuntiare* 'declare, announce' (from *nuntius* 'messenger')

**Announce** and *anunciar* are verbs which share certain senses. However, the Spanish term is wider in scope. It covers the English meanings and is also used to mean “advertise.”



The semantic differences between these two verbs are made obvious with their translations:

(EN) ANNOUNCE= (SP) ANUNCIAR (make known)

(SP) ANUNCIAR = (EN) ADVERTISE; ANNOUNCE

As aforementioned, this reporting verb shares some senses with the Spanish similar item *anunciar*. However, the Spanish word has two additional meanings, that of “advertise” and “portend” which might lead to the use of this verb in contexts where it does not normally occur. However, evidence from both corpora shows that this item is not really a problem for our students:

- ✓ (28) **The prince of Spain Felipe and the journalist Letizia Ortiz were having a love relation since one year ago. They *announced* their marriage in November of 2003. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 45)**

Even so, the Spanish homophone “anunciar” (which signifies *to advertise*) seems to exert an influence on the use of *to announce* as seen in example 29 below. This use is perfectly acceptable in U.S. English, the expected verb would be its British counterpart *advertise*.

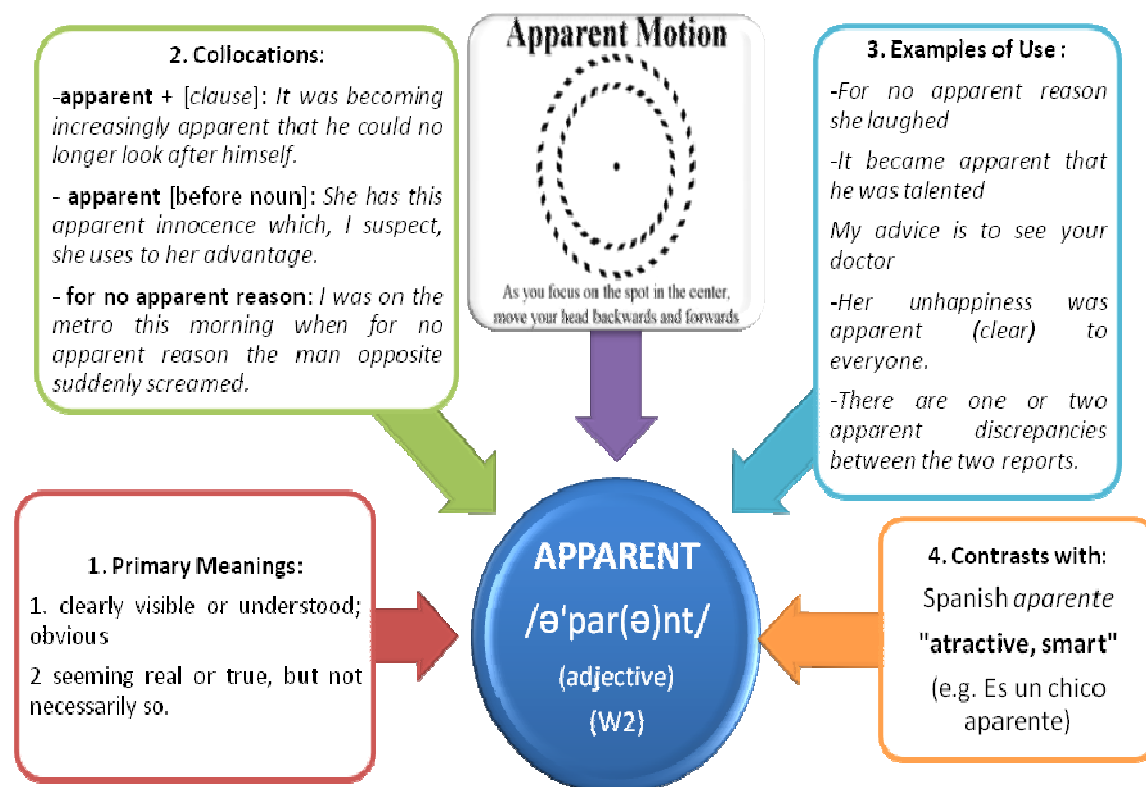
- × (29) (...) **people used to buy the products that are *announced* on t.v, although they are, usually, more expensive than others that are not *announced* <ICLE-SP-UCM-0007.4>**

In any case, this verb is not the source of many problems in the students’ productive usage of English.

► **APPARENT** (adjective): Origin: late Middle English: from Old French *aparant*, from Latin *apparent-* ‘appearing’, from the verb *apparere*.

This partial interlingual homograph shares some denotations with Spanish *aparente*. Still, the Spanish adjective exhibits a more restricted context of use. The English adjective *apparent* commonly occurs in collocations, such as “to become apparent that...” or “this is apparent when...,” where the Spanish adjective would never be used in this type of constructions (as illustrated in the analysis of the concordance lines for

Spanish *aparente* from CREA<sup>44</sup>). The semantic space of the English adjective together with its main collocations and uses are defined in the diagram below:



Generally speaking, we would translate the English adjective *apparent* into Spanish “evidente” instead of “aparente.”

(EN) APPARENT = (SP) OBVIO

(SP) APARENTE = (EN) SEEMING, APPARENT

The English term embraces most of the senses of Spanish *aparente*. This factor is crucial when it comes to the analysis of this word in the corpus. In fact, as the English item includes the senses of Spanish *aparente*, no errors were found.

- ✓ (30) (...) “man is man’s wolf”. What does it mean? It means that man is the only animal that fights against others of his same specie without any reason, or at least, without any *apparent* reason. (SULEC-WP-AL-DOCUMENT 16)

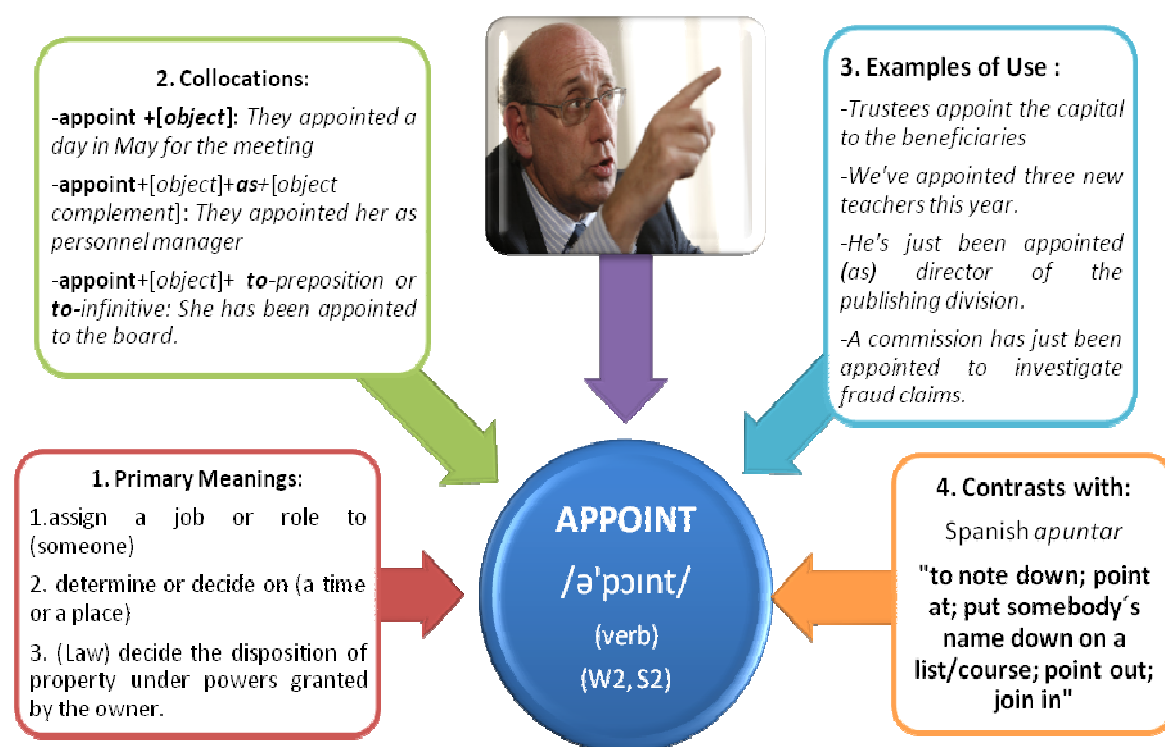
<sup>44</sup> *Corpus de Referencia del Español Actual* (CREA) is a representative corpus for the Spanish language. It includes written and spoken texts (90 per cent vs. 10 per cent, respectively) from different sources and from different periods (between 1975 and 2004). Further information available at: <http://www.rae.es/rae/gestores/gespub000019.nsf/voTodosporId/B104F9F0D0029604C1257164004032BE?OpenDocument>

- ✓ (31) Despite the *apparent* advantages of being a member of such a **weighty common market**, not all countries are able to pay the high admission fee of giving up part of the sovereignty. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0014.2>

A different issue would be the interpretation of English phrases containing this adjective such as “to become apparent that...” or “this is apparent when...” by Spanish learners.

► **APPOINT** (verb): Origin: late Middle English: from Old French *apointer*, from a *point* 'to a point.'

*Appoint* does not have the same senses as Spanish *apuntar* “to make a note; aim at.” The English meaning and uses of *appoint* are specified below.



A bidirectional translation of these terms can help us understand the main semantic differences between these two similar verbs:

(EN) APPOINT = (SP) NOMBRAR, DESIGNAR

(SP) APUNTAR = (EN) TO MAKE A NOTE OF; AIM AT SB

Regarding the corpus analysis, there is not so much evidence so as to judge the students' general use of this word. There is one single example of *appoint*. In this case,



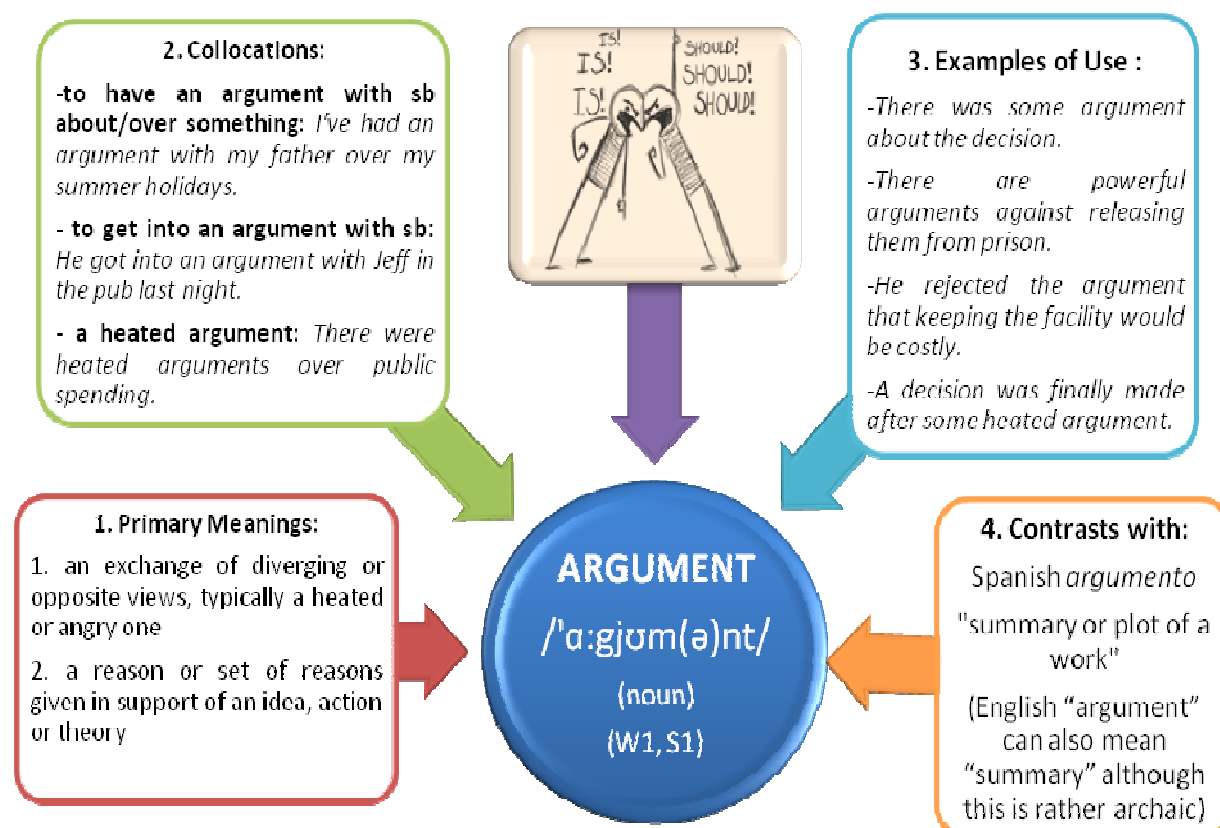
the influence of the Spanish word *apuntar* (“quote somebody’s words or note down”) is hidden behind the use of *appoint*.

- × (32) **Aristoles said that a play had to have a beginning, a history and an end. Although he was in some sense misunderstood in this period. This idea of the history told in a play was much better achieved with the division of the play in five acts that Seneca appointed.** <ICLE-SP-UCM-0020.1>

The questionnaire in the second part of the study looks at this word by asking learners if they think that the collocation to “appoint with a gun” is correct (see chapter 4, section 4.7.2.2). Answers and opinions on the correctness of this phrase would shed some more light on the meaning Spanish students attach to this verb. This phrase has been introduced to see if they would use this word in such a context to mean “to aim the gun at someone.”

► **ARGUMENT** (noun): Origin: Middle English (in the sense ‘process of reasoning’): via Old French from Latin *argumentum*, from *arguere* ‘make clear, prove, accuse’

The English noun *argument* and the Spanish word *argumento* are connected with the idea of “reasoning.” However, there are senses that these words do not share.



The translations below display the shared senses and the main semantic differences between these two similar nouns:

(EN) ARGUMENT = (SP) DISCUSIÓN; ARGUMENTO

(SP) ARGUMENTO = (EN) ARGUMENT; PLOT

Corpus data concerning this noun indicate that learners use this noun in word combinations such as *\*this weighty argument*, *\*after long years of arguments related with human rights* or *\*that's the most heard argument* which do not sound totally natural or accurate in English. Besides, Spanish students resort to the word “argument/s” where it would be more suitable to find the word “reason/s” in English (see 33), and sometimes they use *argument* instead of *discussion* as example 34 shows.

- \* (33) We could say that smoking is a question of public health versus personal freedom.(...) Secondly, we could say that if air pollution is the *argument*, what about traffic pollution? (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 1261)
- \* (34) This system is being the subject of a lot of *argument* in Spain at the moment <ICLE-SP-UCM-0026.4>

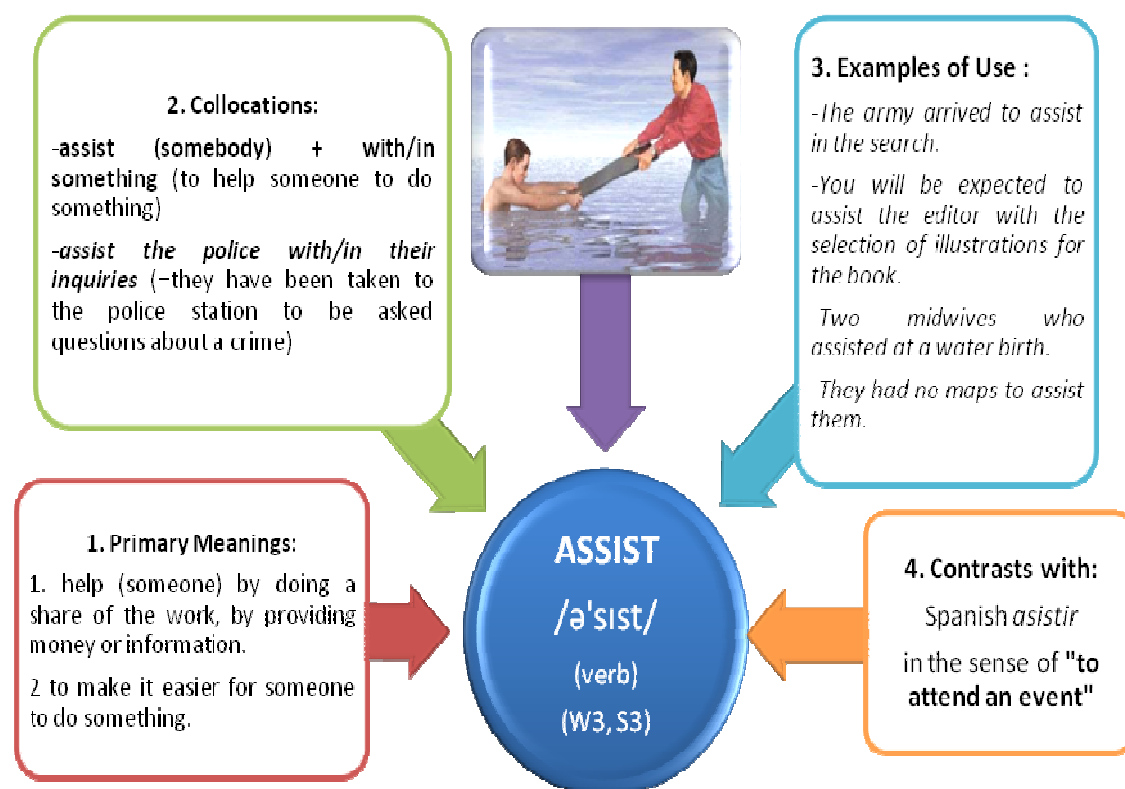
However, there are also examples that illustrate typical collocations of the English noun (e.g *Another argument against smoking in public places is that...*, or *to support this argument*).

- ✓ (35) The statement "feminists have done more harm to the cause of women than good" is false (...) In order to support this *argument*, we are going to review the following subjects: Labour discrimination, the right to vote, ...<ICLE-SP-UCM-0005.1>

At any rate, there is a balance between the accurate and inaccurate uses of this word, the explanation for this is that the English word *argument* and the Spanish word *argument* are partial false friends; therefore, there are some semantic overlaps between the L1 and L2 and this could justify the high proportion of accurate uses found.

► **ASSIST** (verb): Origin: late Middle English: from Old French *assister*, from Latin *assistere* 'take one's stand by', from *ad-* 'to, at' + *sistere* 'take one's stand'

The verb *assist* reminds us of the Spanish verb *asistir*. However, these words do not share the same contexts of use.



There is a clear difference between *assist* and *asistir*, the former denotes the idea of helping others while the latter refers to the idea of going to a place, particularly a school, a class, or a concert.

(EN) ASSIST = (SP) AYUDAR

(SP) ASISTIR = (EN) TO ATTEND AN EVENT

The use of the verb *assist* occurs in a text that contains several false friends (marked in *italics*). Document number 196 from SULEC is worthy of note and relevant for the present study.

- × (36) (...) Spanish society felt very disgust and attend concerts organized for NUNCA MÁIS and shows for get money. Many people felt *sympathy* for Galicia but I think that have made *assist* with her hands and exit the street for the demission. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 196)
- × (37) We were talking about the 60s, when the freedom and the discontrol began in this country. It could smoke in the “cafés” (of course); in the University, even when you were doing an exam or when you were *assisting* at class ... (SULEC-WP-AL-DOCUMENT 853)

It is really difficult to analyse the first of these two examples. Example 36 is full with false friends and it makes sense only within a particular socio-cultural context. This student speaks about a popular movement in Galicia whose motto was *Nunca Máis*

(*Never Again*) created in response to an environmental disaster caused by the shipwreck of an oil tanker called *Prestige* which affected the Galician coast in 2002 and affected the local economy very negatively. What the learner tries to say is that many people all over Spain helped Galician population economically or emotionally by raising money but they required more volunteers to clean the coastline or to protest against the government. With this idea in mind and back to the linguistic analysis of the extract, *assist* is correctly used if we take into account the semantic properties of the word (it has the sense of “help”) but its use seems to be moderately influenced by Spanish. Two Spanish concepts *ayudar* and  *echar una mano* are combined in the expression *assist with her hands*; the English expression “give a hand” would be the most suitable option here. In this vein, four out of the five false friends observed are not confused in their meanings but in their uses. This might be indicative of teachers drawing attention on the meaning of some words without pointing out other peculiarities of word usage, such as register, typical collocations or the possibility of inflecting those forms. In this example, nouns are not inflected when used in their adjectival functions as shown by the use of *disgust* instead of *disgusted*. Besides that, this last adjective is also misused in its meaning. Verbs also remain invariable, base forms are used when referring to the past (*attend* is used instead of *attended*). In other cases, unusual word lexical combinations are detected such as the chunk *exit the street* that is used to imply the idea of *take to the streets* (to ask for the president’s resignation) or the already commented *assist with her hands*.

In the ICLE corpus, there are three cases in which this verb occurs and most of them encapsulate the English sense of “give aid.”

- ✓ (38) In most cases they *assist* people who need help, like old people, young people who have problems with drugs, invalid people, etc. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0010.4>

However, there is one example in ICLE that proves “Spanish inspiration” once more. At this time, both the Spanish meaning and use are present.

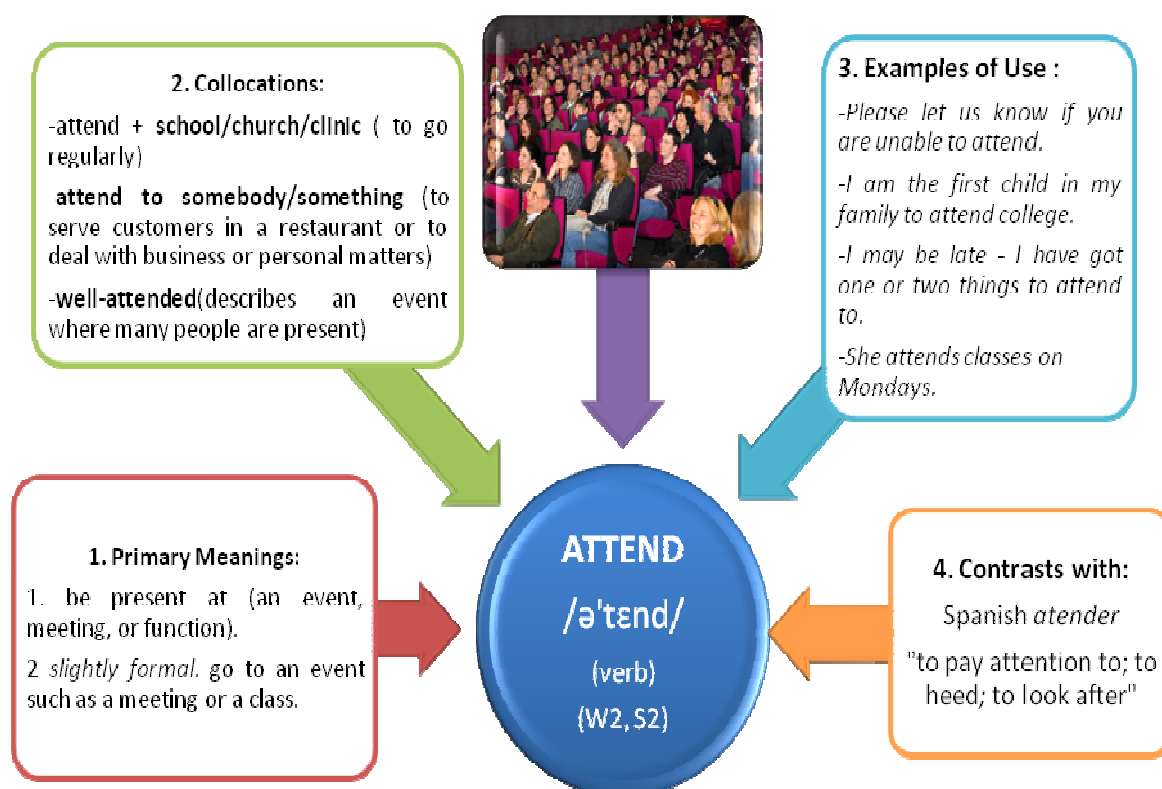
- ✗ (39) If we will *assist* to the birth of an European nation, only time can say so. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0010.1>

This Spanish student seems to be making a literal translation of the Spanish word *asistir* into English without being aware of the semantic differences existing between them.

Thus the use of the word is influenced by the Spanish verb *asistir* implying the idea of “witness something.” This meaning is the one the student intends to express. This somehow gives us an idea of the strong impact of the learners’ mother tongue. However, we do not really know if the learner is familiar with the real meaning of *assist* and if its use could be regarded as a communicative strategy to fill in the gap for not remembering the suitable verb for this context. What can be said is that this language learner is conceivably acquainted with this word since it is rightly spelled out.

► **ATTEND** (verb): Origin: Middle English (in the sense ‘apply one’s mind or energies to’): from Old French *attendre*, from Latin *attendere*, from *ad-* ‘to’ + *tendere* ‘stretch’

English *attend* and Spanish *atender* are partially deceptive false friends. The English verb covers the core meaning of the Spanish word (attend to = pay attention to), but there are meanings of the Spanish verb which are not expressed by English *attend* and the other way round. This therefore may be a source of problems for students. In any case, the semantic description of the English term is shown in the diagram which follows:



Regarding the core distinction between these two verbs, the translations below clearly reflect it:

(EN) TO ATTEND = (SP) IR A

(SP) ATENDER = (EN) PAY ATTENTION TO

This verb comes out in conventional English collocations produced by our students, such as *attend university, classes, conferences* and *schools*. This use is therefore marked as correct.

- ✓ (40) (...) some people prefer to do short courses, *attend* conferences etcetera instead of doing a degree. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 1341)
- ✓ (41) How many whites were once uncomfortable with allowing black children to *attend* the same schools as their own? (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 1350).
- ✓ (42) Moreover, students must *attend* classes an average of thirty hours a week which does not allow them to devote to study appropriately either. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0008.4>

However, there are instances which show some traces of Spanish transfer although they comply with the English meaning. Thus, the grammatical properties of the Spanish verb *asistir a* come into view when the verb *attend* is followed by the preposition *to* in examples 43 and 44.

- \* (43) (...) I think that people would *attend* more frequently to classes People like Law students (known due to not *attend* to classes “regularly”) would go to classes ... (SULEC-WP-AL-DOCUMENT 161)
- \* (44) University degrees are theoretical, they doesn't prepare people for the real world. You go to the university, *attend* to classes but you don't learn anything about real world. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0001.4>

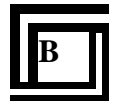
The main meaning of the English form *attend* is “go to.” However, *attend* is a polysemic word and also means “pay attention to, concentrate on” and “take care of someone.” The Spanish term *atender* shares this sense (as gathered in sense 4 in the RAE dictionary). In spite of this, the syntactic requirements of those verbs are different in the two languages. In examples 45 and 46, *attend* shows the grammatical properties of Spanish *atender*; therefore, these examples are grammatically incorrect in English. The English verb cannot be followed neither by a *that*-clause (45), nor by an object

without *to* (46) when it has the meaning of “look after” or “pay attention to something,” *attend* must be followed by the preposition “to.”

- × (45) Parents [ ...] have to *attend* that their sons weren't hear to smoke. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 919)
- × (46) Women capacity to work has been demonstrated thoroughout history and they have now a very complicated life: most of them work at the same time that they *attend* their houses. But society doesn't reward you for being woman <ICLE-SP-UCM-0010.5>

Language transfer is also seen in example 47. In this case, the student uses the word *attend* where she should say *treat*. This is the result of the influence of the Spanish collocation “atender a un paciente.”

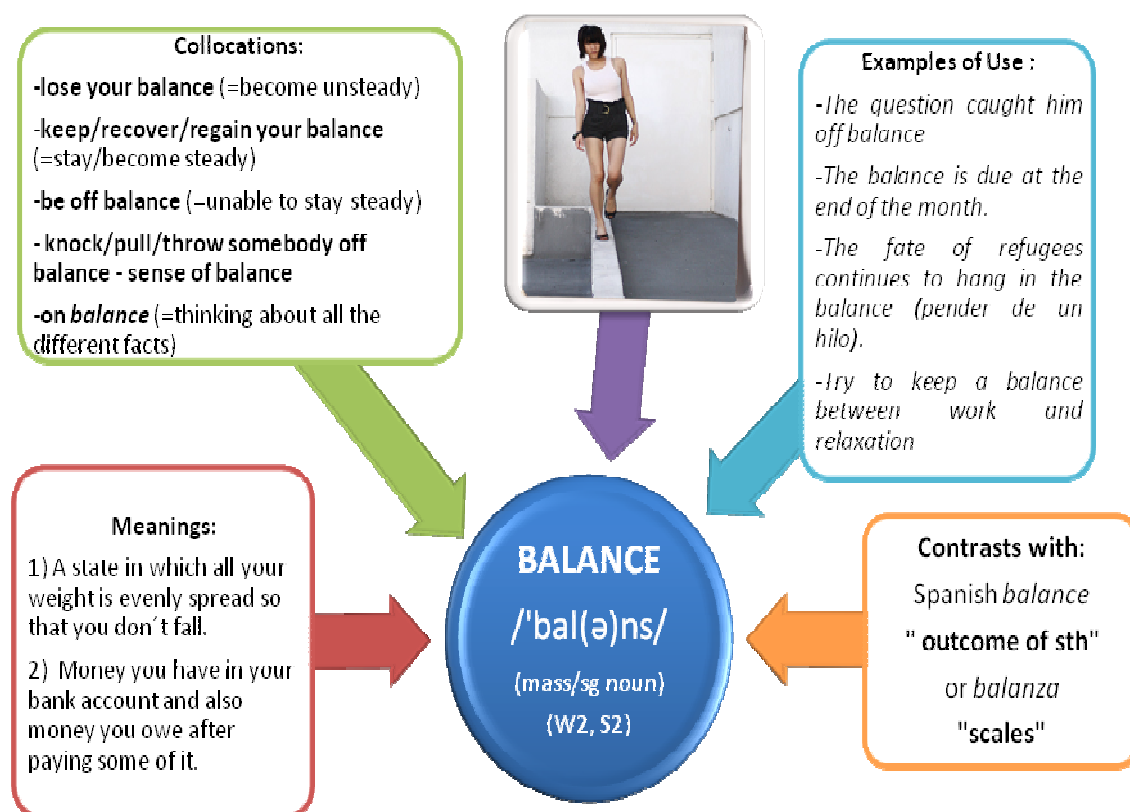
- × (47) ...it is very expensive to your nation to *attend* the smokers in the hospitals, hundreds of people are *attended* every year in the hospital for this bad habit, and lots of people die for smoke (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 986)



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► **BALANCE** (mass noun): Origin: Middle English: from Old French *balance* (noun), *balancer* (verb), based on late Latin (*libra*) *bilanx* '(balance) having two scale pans', from *bi-* 'twice, having two' + *lanx* 'scale pan'

The word *balance* is identical in form to Spanish *balance* (“outcome;” “balance” in economy) and very similar to the noun *balanza* (“scales”). This formal similarity does not imply an identical semantic equivalence. The defining traits of the noun *balance* are shown in the diagram below.



As suggested by the “contrasts with” square in the diagram (the orange one), the Spanish similar nouns *balanza* and *balance* do not have exactly the same senses as English *balance*. The translations provided may help us make the distinction clearer:

(EN) BALANCE = (SP) EQUILIBRIO; SALDO

(SP) BALANCE/BALANZA = (EN) BALANCE SHEET; OUTCOME/SCALES

In general, this word does not seem to pose great difficulties in the students' use of English. The occurrence of a phrase such as, “to be on the balance” (48) might suggest an underlying influence of the Spanish word *balanza* “scales,” already stored in the students' mental lexicon. Nevertheless, learners clearly show that they know how to use this lexical item in examples 49 and 50. They use the noun *balance* quite creatively in a phrase such as *fix a balance between something and something else* (49) and in the idiomatic expression *on balance* (50).

- × (48) **Social conventions are important (...) It is a society of protocole and superficiality which is shown in the play. Women's sentiments have no place when economic interests are on the balance.**<sup>45</sup> <ICLE-SP-UCM-0005.8>

<sup>45</sup> “On balance” exists in English but with a different meaning. The correct phrase in this context is “to be in the balance” which is used in English to refer to something that is in an undetermined and often critical position.

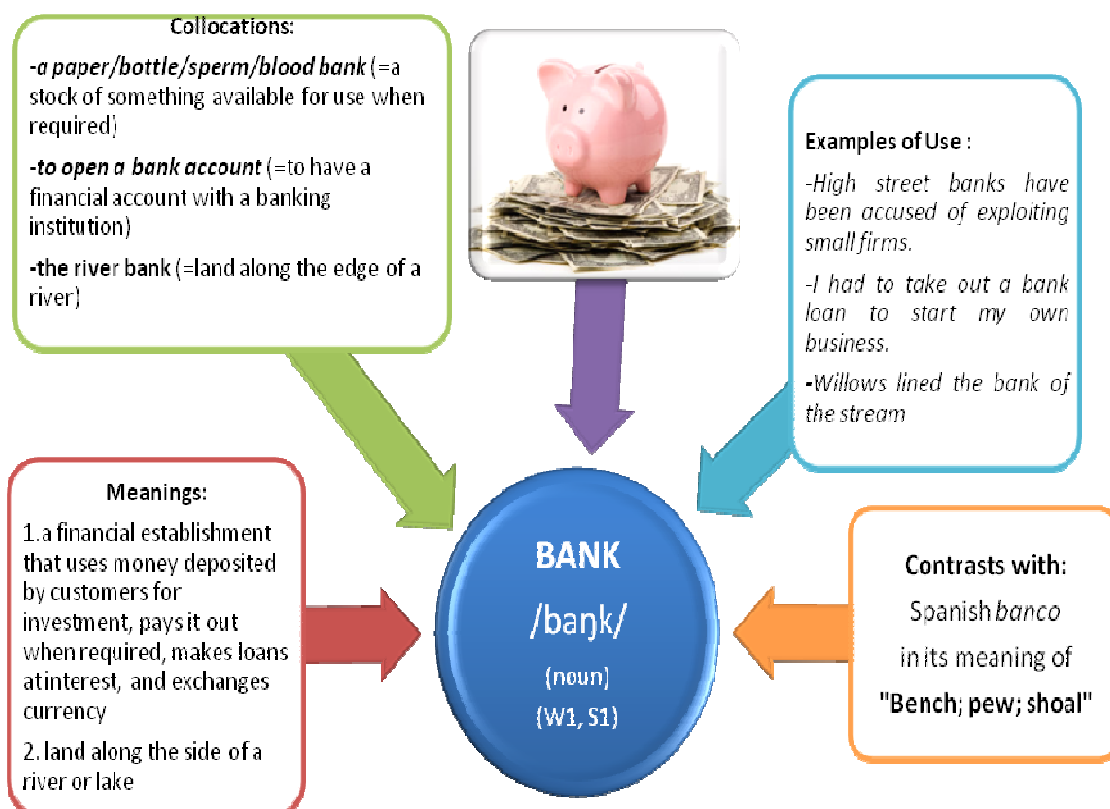


- ✓ (49) It is undoubtedly true that things could improve, that a solution should be found so as to fix a *balance* between the theoretical knowledges and the practical ones that we acquire at university. One might reasonably suppose that practical courses at university would help a lot to attenuate this unbalance and to strengthen the validity of the system.<ICLE-SP-UCM-0012.1>
- ✓ (50) *On balance*, I think that the new rule is a positive one and that it will indeed reduce car accidents, as people are afraid of losing some points for drinking more than they are allowed to or for driving too fast. (SULEC-WP-AL-DOCUMENT 1296)

The overall analysis of this lexical item suggests that learners have acquired this item properly.

► **BANK** (noun): Origin: late 15th century (originally denoting a money dealer's table): from French *banque* or Italian *banca*, from medieval Latin *banca*, *bancus*, of Germanic origin; related to *bank* and *bench*

English *bank* and Spanish *banco* share some senses, but not all of them. The Spanish noun is very frequently used to mean “bench,” while the English term essentially refers to “the institution that makes loans, and receives deposits” and even to “a river side.”



A basic translation of this term is provided below:

(EN) BANK = (SP) BANCO; ORILLA

(SP) BANCO= (EN) BENCH, PEW; BANK; SHOAL

The number of correct uses of the word *bank* exceeds the number of errors. There is only one single case in which an intermediate level student makes a serious mistake and uses this noun to refer to a “bench” (example 51, a clear case of semantic interference).

- ✱ (51) **I remember a day when I man in suit was sitting in a *bank* (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 297)**

This noun is correctly used in the rest of the cases; thus, prototypical collocations such as *to rob a bank*, *to open a bank account*, etc occur in learner language. This shows the learners’ good command of this word.

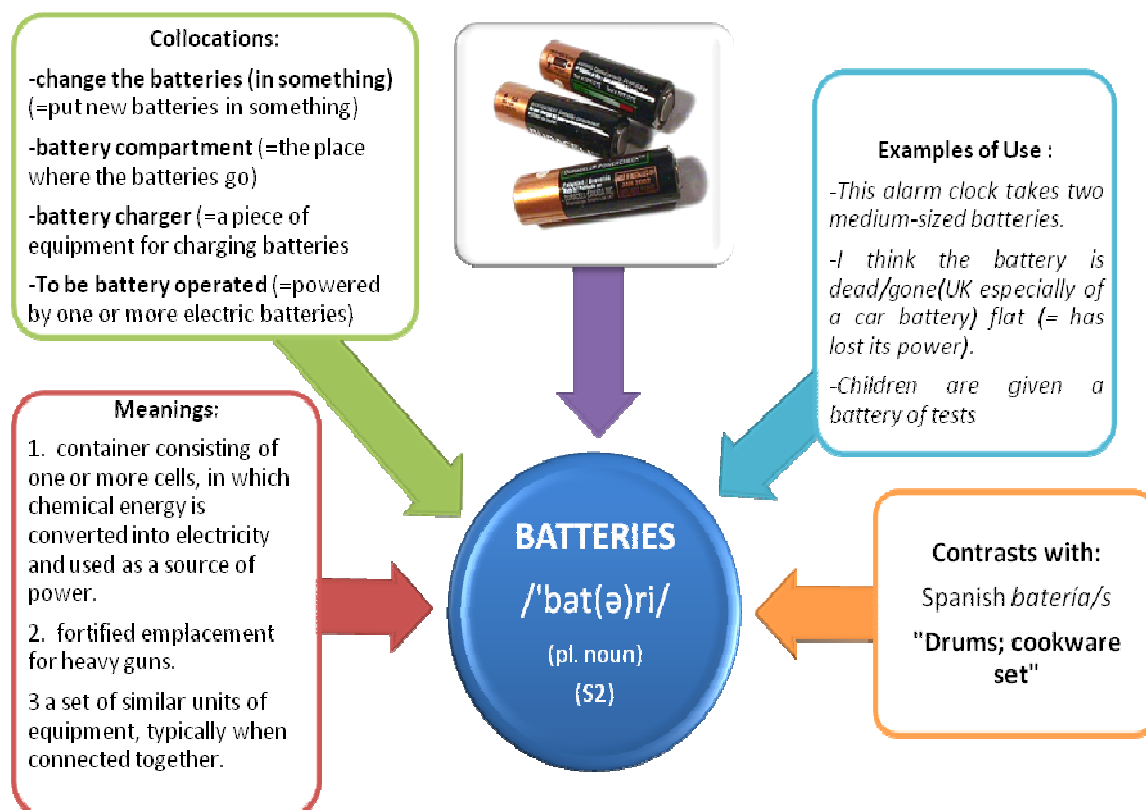
- ✓ (52) **students are not really prepared for the real world in any matter, for example, most of them do not know how to open a *bank account* and so on, so forth. <ICLE-SP-UCM-005.10>**
- ✓ (53) **It is not fair for a non-smoker person to inhale smoke when he or she is eating or waiting in the queue in a *bank*. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 1281)**
- ✓ (54) **I think that this people can't be punishment in the same way that the people who rob a *bank* or a shop. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0045.4>**

► **BATTERY** (pl. noun): Origin: Middle English: from Old French *baterie*, from *battre* ‘to strike’, from Latin *battuere*. The original sense was ‘metal articles wrought by hammering’, later ‘a number of pieces of artillery used together’, whence ‘a number of Leyden jars connected up so as to discharge simultaneously’ (mid 18th century)

The English noun *batteries* can be understood in two different ways in the field of electricity. Nowadays, a *battery* is commonly associated with an individual device which converts chemical energy into electrical energy. Thus, batteries can be found in cars, in portable devices like: mobile phones, PCs, MP4s. In Spanish, we call this “una batería.”

However, when we use this noun in the plural it takes a different shape (e.g. alkaline batteries,...). They are also power tools which do not necessarily depend on an alternative source of power and which are commonly used for remote controls, lanterns, etc. The name in Spanish for this second referent is “pilas.” The semantic domain of the

Spanish noun *batería* goes beyond the electricity and military fields to make reference to a number of different things (e.g. drums, a set of something, etc), as can be gathered from the figure below.



The main differences between these words are shown by means of a bidirectional translation here:

(EN) BATTERIES = (SP) PILAS; BATERÍA

(SP) BATERÍA= (EN) BATTERY; DRUMS

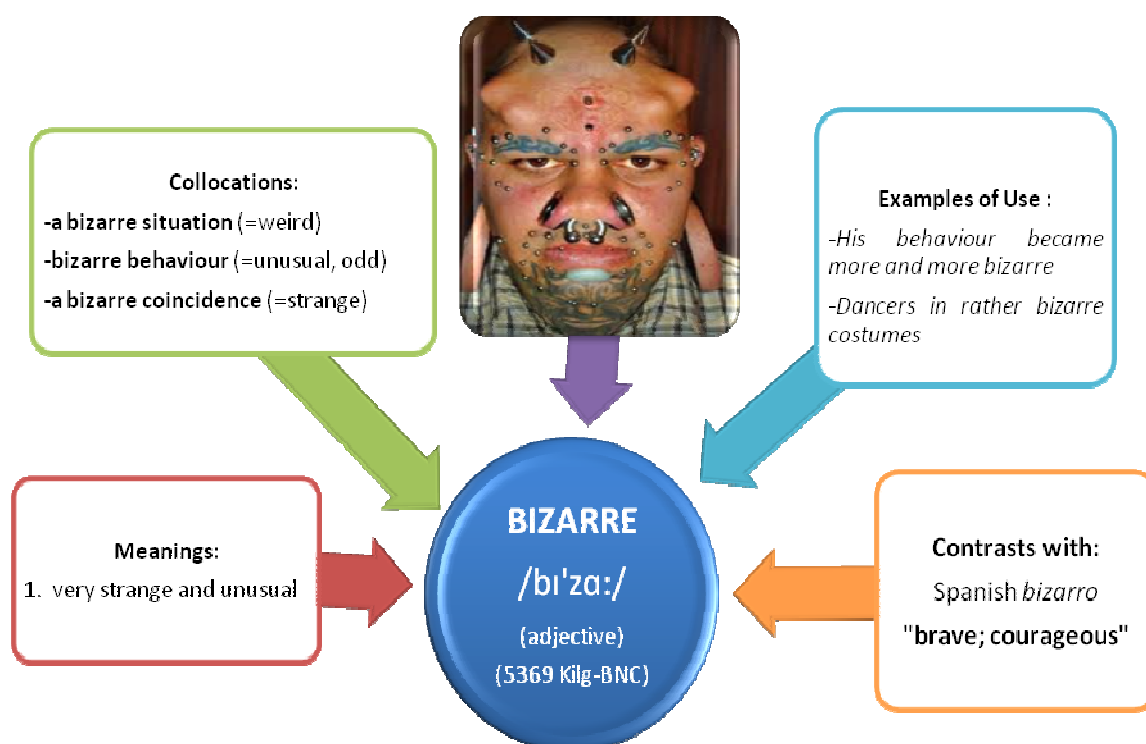
Evidence from ICLE reveals that Spanish students are familiar with the basic meaning of this English word. In fact, learner language shows an accurate use of this noun.

- ✓ (55) All together can make our planet a habitable place, it is in your hand to destroy it or to preserve it. Use ecological measures such as recycled, do not throw away your *batteries*, care for your nearer hood, do not spend water. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0031.3>
- ✓ (56) Our confort carry us to throw used paper, glass, *batteries*... together with our trash, instead of of follow a method of recyclage which would avoid so much harm to everyone. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0031.3>

It is worth pointing out here that this noun occurs in texts dealing with recycling. This may be an indication of the contexts in which students have previously found this word.

► **BIZARRE** (adjective): Origin: mid 17th century: from French, from Italian *bizzarro* 'angry'

The word *bizarre* is clearly defined by the picture of the diagram below. It is an adjective that is commonly used to mean strange or unusual in English. However, a similar word exists in Spanish, the term *bizarro* which is used to mean “brave.”



If we pay attention to the translations of these terms, it is possible to see the shared senses and the main differences in a clear way:

(EN) BIZARRE = (SP) EXTRAÑO, RARO

(SP) BIZARRO= (EN) BRAVE; STRANGE

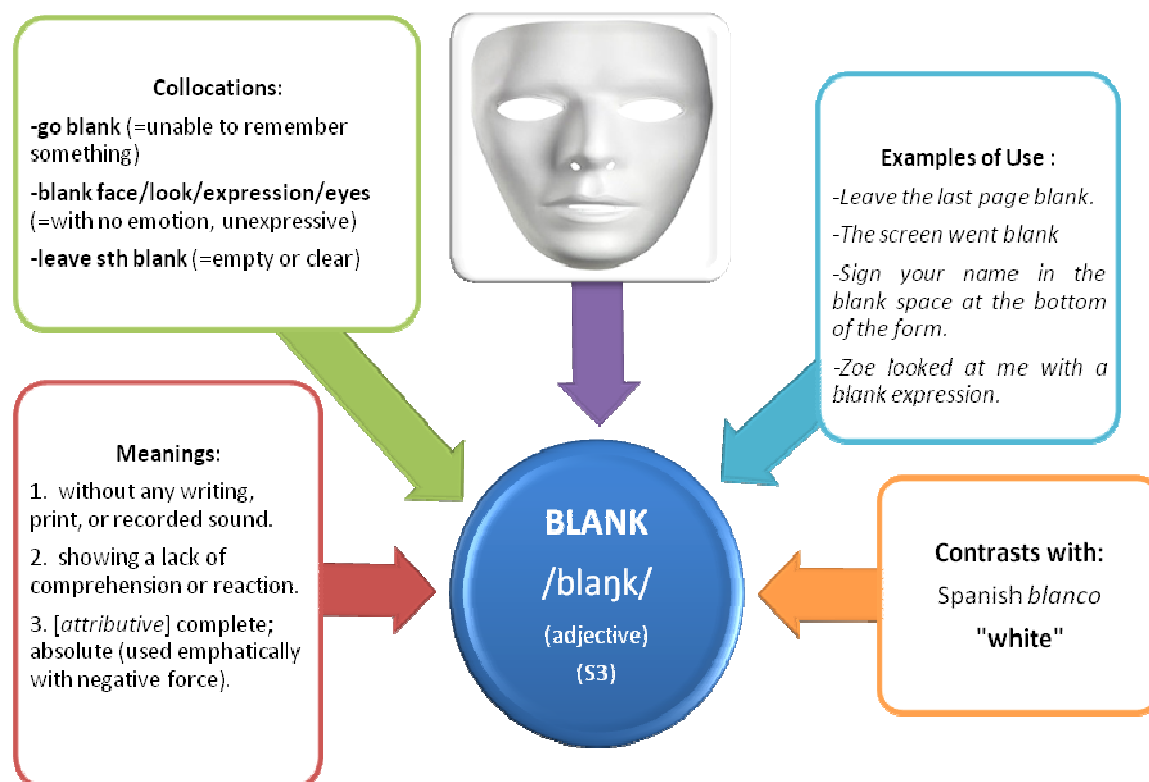
The word *bizarre* is not problematic for Spanish students of English. The three examples found in SULEC show that students are acquainted with the meaning and use of this word. No traces of Spanish transfer are found. It is possible that there are no mistakes here, because the Spanish word *bizarro* (originally “brave”) is now being

influenced by the English and French sense of “strange, odd.” Besides, it is not a common word in Spanish. It is possible that many Spanish students ignore or have never used this adjective in their mother tongue.

- ✓ (57) (...) if you didn't smoke in 60s, you would be a very *bizarre* person; (...) Now if you smoke, you will be a very *bizarre* person. (SULEC-WP-AL-853)
- ✓ (58) There are people who still believe that homosexuals are *bizarre*, that they should abandon their feelings and beliefs to follow a group of sociological norms that somebody who we do not know created. These people are wrong and they do not want to admit it. (SULEC-WP-IL-1328)

► **BLANK** (noun/adj./adv.): Origin: Middle English (in the sense ‘white, colourless’): from Old French *blanc* 'white', ultimately of Germanic origin

This word is analysed in its adjectival function. Its formal similarity with *blanco* in Spanish is conspicuous. However, this formal resemblance may be misleading and the contexts in which these two words occur are different.



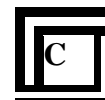
A simple translation may shed more light on the meanings of these words in both English and Spanish:

(EN) BLANK = (SP) EN BLANCO; INEXPRESIVO/A

(SP) BLANCO= (EN) WHITE; PALE

As regards the use of this partial false friend, it appears in connection with a poetic style called the blank verse. This technical term is fully acceptable in English. We do not have additional data concerning this adjective in other contexts. As a consequence, the second part of this study (chapter 4) looks further into this lexical item (see chapter 4, sections 4.6.1. and 4.6.2., pp. 343, 387 for more information). In this second part, students are asked to judge if the phrase “a blank expression on your face” is correct in English. Through their responses to this question, we will know whether students know the combinatory possibilities of this adjective or not. In the meantime, I will provide an example of this adjective in its collocation “blank verse.”

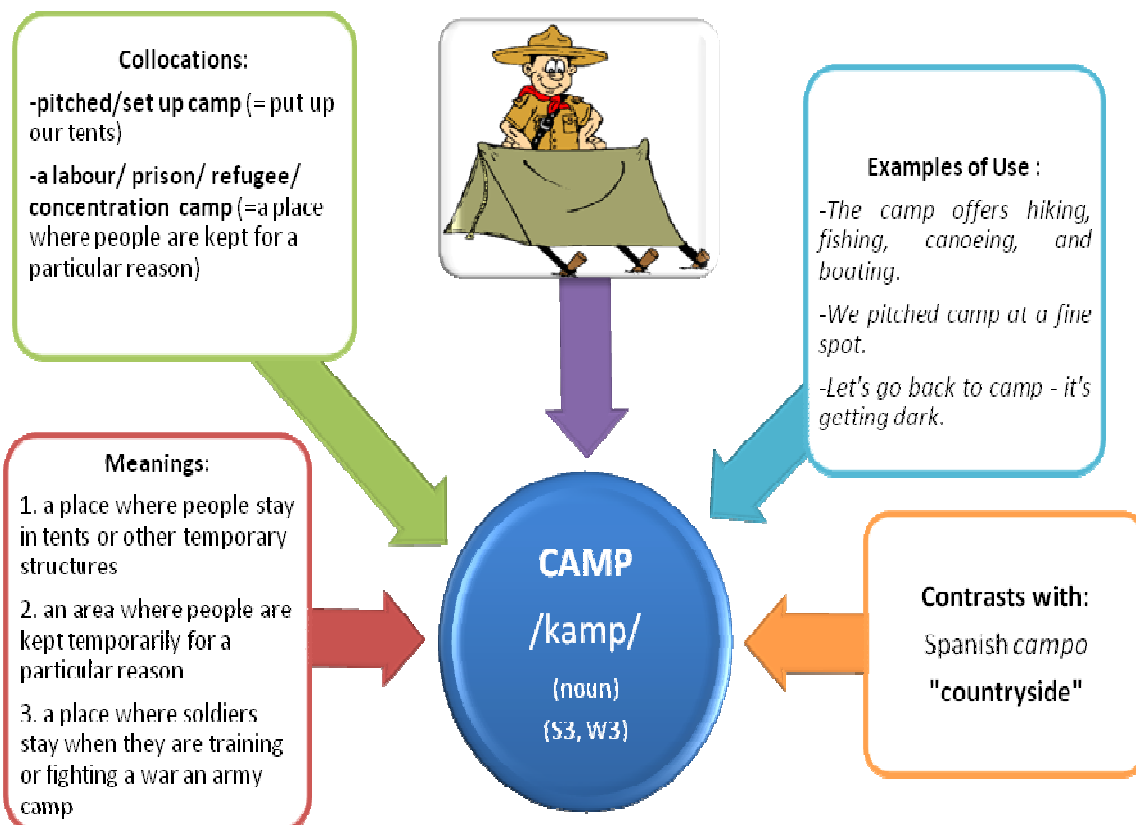
- ✓ (59) First I have to mention, is the use of the *Blank Verse*: / u - / u - / u - /u - / - Another feature that appears clearly in the text is the use of Polysemic words. Words from Latin that Milton uses with both meanings the Latin and the English one. Thus he can express more things with the using of less words. <ICLE-SP-ALC-0004.1>




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► **CAMP** (noun): Origin: early 16th century: from French *camp*, *champ*, from Italian *campo*, from Latin *campus* 'level ground', specifically applied to the Campus Martius in Rome, used for games, athletic practice, and military drill

A *camp* is traditionally linked to a place where an army or body of troops is lodged in tents or other temporary means of shelter, with or without intrenchments. Surprisingly, this word resembles *campo* which means “field or countryside” in Spanish. The semantic space of the English term is specified below.



A contrast between those terms by means of a bidirectional translation of the core meanings may be useful:

(EN) CAMP = (SP) CAMPAMENTO

(SP) CAMPO= (EN) FIELD

There is only one instance of the noun “camp” in the written production of Spanish learners. It occurs in the right context, since it is connected to military affairs. In spite of the several mistakes that surround this word in this piece of writing (the learner should have written something like *youngsters stay in military camps against their will*), the learner is showing that he knows the word and its meaning.

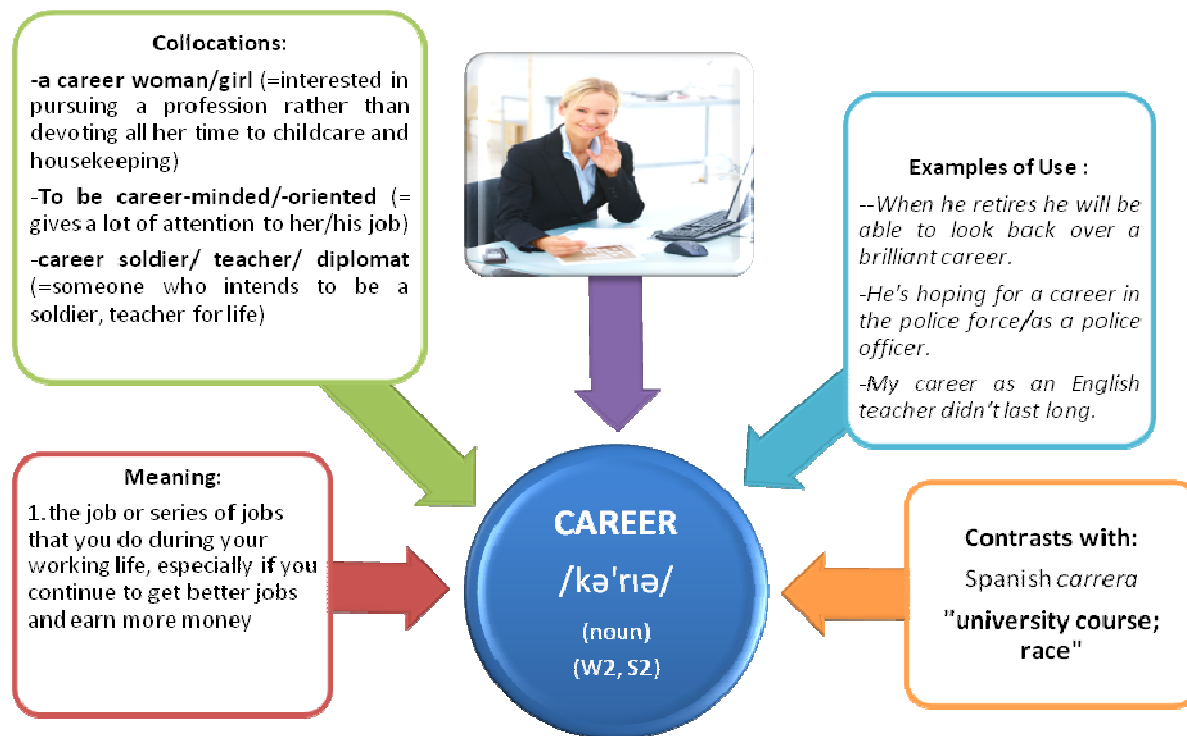
- ✓ (60) **There are some people that think that obligatory military service (...) does not respect individual's freedom because the government forces boys to do training. As a result of this, youngs stay reluctantly in the camp,<sup>46</sup> againts their will.<ICLE-SP-UCM-0026.4>**

The word *camp* is used in connection with the military service but a compound phrase such as “in the training camp” would make it better.

<sup>46</sup> Short form for *military camps*. The use of the noun *camp* sounds informal here but its sense can be retrieved from context.

► **CAREER** (noun): Origin: mid 16th century (denoting a road or racecourse): from French *carrière*, from Italian *carriera*, based on Latin *carrus* 'wheeled vehicle'

English *career* implies “working” not “studying a degree,” this is the main difference between English and Spanish. The English term is explained below in more detail.



A quick way of noticing the semantic differences is by means of a simple translation:

(EN) CAREER = (SP) CARRERA PROFESIONAL

(SP) CARRERA = (EN) UNIVERSITY COURSE; RACE

As aforesaid, English *career* implies “having an occupation.” However, this noun is used to refer to “university degree.” This word is misused in 99 per cent of the cases, becoming one of the most problematic for SSEFL (Spanish Students of English as a Foreign Language). The most prevalent uses in learners’ language are illustrated in examples below from 61 to 65:

- \* (61) When a person decides to go to university to study a *career*. (SULEC-WP-AL-DOCUMENT 210)
- \* (62) [ ... ] when I finish the *career*. (SULEC-WP-AL-DOCUMENT 404)

In ICLE, *career* continues to be used in the Spanish way, as shown below:

- \* (63) When you choose to study an university *career*, you expect you may get a job within the branch you have chosen; but in the majority of the cases, that is not so. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0030.4>



- × (64) To speak under my own experience, since I am a university student in my second year of *career*. The first year, although was not bad, it was still not. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0020.5>
- × (65) Few years ago, the study of a *career* was destined to the offsprings from wealthy families but nowadays, the pyramid has been turned upside down and the theory, the most important feature of the *careers*, overshadows technical jobs. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0001.3>

Only three cases (one in SULEC and two in ICLE) are acceptable. This is the single example that shows a correct use of the lexical item in the SULEC corpus.

- ✓ (66) I think that Letizia is very beautiful and she knows how to behave herself, [ ... ] I wouldn't take that step forgetting my professional *career* and my past life. What I don't like is that we have to pay the wedding with our money. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 25)

In ICLE, there are two accurate examples of the word *career*, both occurring in the same text:

- ✓ (67) [ ... ] Second, the fact of enrolling the army has a negative effect on the person's studies or, in other cases, on their professional *career*, producing a sense of laziness in those who have been deprived of their chosen way of life. [ ... ] The advantages of these countries are considerably important. On the one hand, they are provided with a professional army consisting of qualified people, both men and women who have chosen to develop a military *career*. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0046.3>.

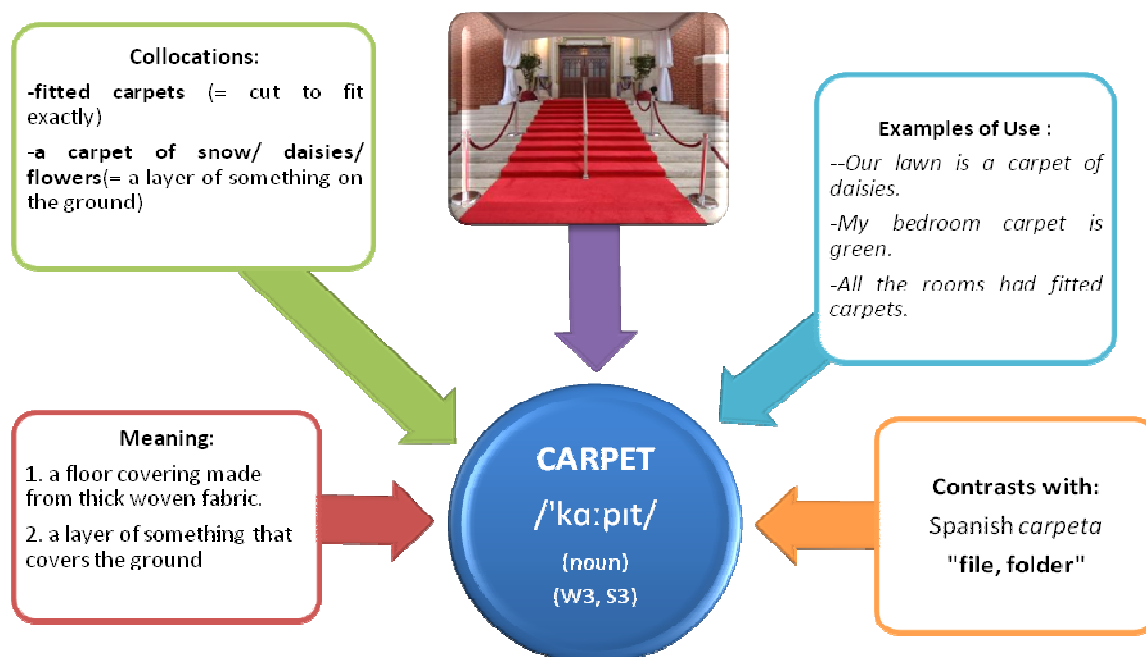
As seen in the corpora, this FF shows the effects of crosslinguistic influence recurrently. This illustrates the importance of making some remarks on a meaningful teaching of this word. One way of doing this is by teaching this lexical item in context so that students could more clearly understand its meaning and use. In order to do so, teachers could resort to some illustrative examples, such as the ones that follow below:

- ◆ *She played more than 800 games in a career spanning 20 years.*
- ◆ *He began his professional career as a teacher.*
- ◆ *She is now concentrating on a career as a fashion designer.*

Likewise, it would be practical to point out that the Spanish concept of *carrera* is expressed in English with the noun *degree* or with the phrase *university course*. Thus, if we want to say that someone is doing a university course at Exeter, we should say: *She is doing a degree at Exeter University*, not *\*She is doing a career at Exeter University*.

► **CARPET** (noun): Origin: Middle English (denoting a thick fabric used as a cover for a table or bed): from Old French *carpite* or medieval Latin *carpita*, from obsolete Italian *carpita* 'woollen counterpane', based on Latin *carpere* 'pluck, pull to pieces'

The word **carpet** is similar to *carpeta*. However, Spanish students should know that **carpet** cannot be used to mean “folder.”



**Carpet** and *carpeta* are total false friends, their meanings are completely different in all contexts.

(EN) CARPET = (SP) ALFOMBRA

(SP) CARPETA = (EN) FOLDER; FILE

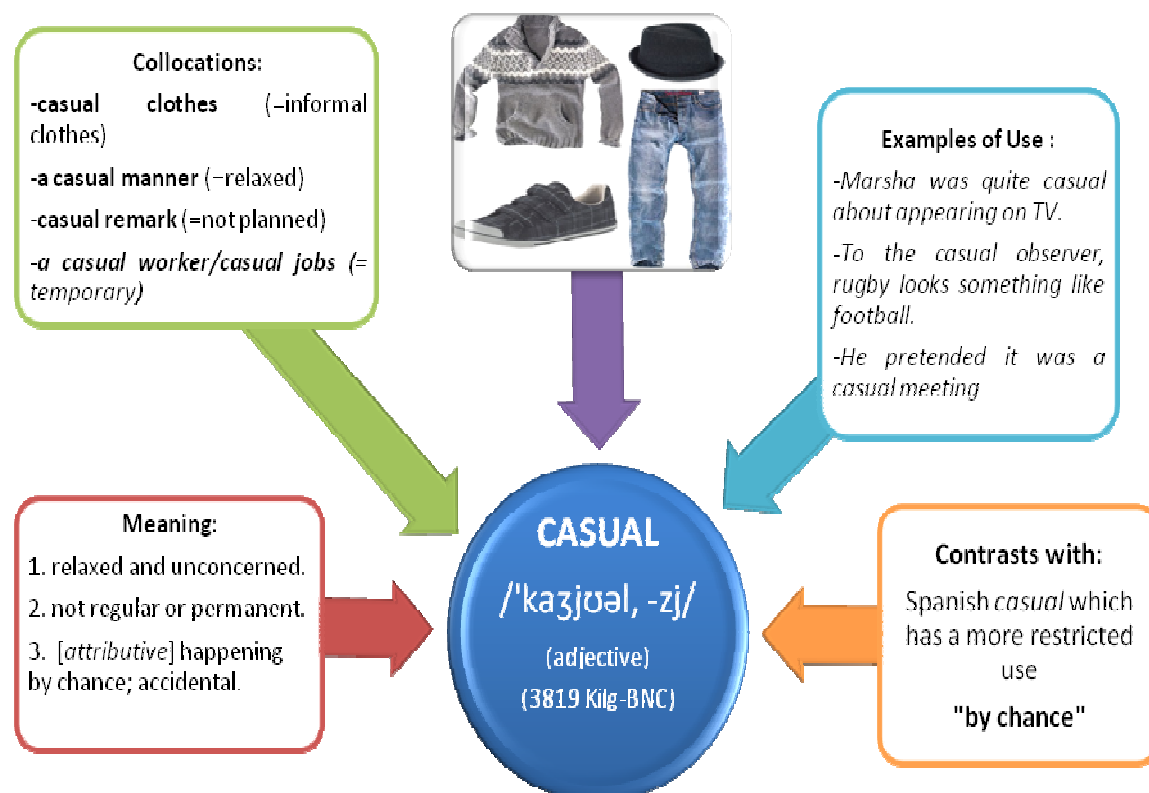
*Carpet* only occurs three times in ICLE while no occurrences of this word are registered in SULEC. The three sample sentences containing this word are correct.

- ✓ (68) Let's think about the thousands of children who have to work in order to support their families: The little miners of Colombia, the children who work more than ten hours a day making *carpets* or crystal bracelets in India, ...<ICLE-SP-UCM-0013.2>
- ✓ (69) Think about how would be your house without the last century's inventions. Who is going clean the *carpet*, wash the thousand clothes every person in the family has in their closets or cut the loan? (If you have one). <ICLE-SP-UCM-0002.3>
- ✓ (70) Another point is when the author writes about the admirable smoke and drink, the deep arm-chairs and the pleasant *carpets*; .... <ICLE-SP-UCM-0040.4>

As can be seen, this item is used in the context of furniture with no reference to the sense conveyed by the Spanish similar word *carpeta*. Both the English and the Spanish terms refer to objects but they are quite different. While *carpet* is a “big rug,” a *carpeta* is a “folder.” We do not have enough examples to make a generalisation and assert that Spanish students of English with an advanced level use this noun correctly in all cases without confusing it with *carpeta*; however, from the examples above, this seems to be the case. There are no traces of the L1 influence. The reason why there is no confusion between the English item and the Spanish term may be related to the fact that the English term is introduced in learners’ vocabulary at early stages of second language acquisition in EFL classrooms. Students may have already acquired it by the time they completed their essays. Notwithstanding, experience tells us that when students want to say *carpeta* in English, they are inclined to resort to the word *carpet* instead of *folder*.

► **CASUAL** (adjective): Origin: late Middle English: from Old French *casuel* and Latin *casualis*, from *casus* 'fall.'

English *casual* and Spanish *casual* do not share the same meanings and cannot apply in the same contexts.



The core meanings of these two adjectives are illustrated in the following bidirectional translations:

(EN) CASUAL = (SP) INFORMAL

(SP) CASUAL = (EN) OFF CHANCE

*Casual* is not a frequent word in the corpora. Only two examples have been recorded. In both of them, the adjective *casual* is used to mean “happening offhand, by chance.” The English term might have this semantic nuance on very rare occasions. Its primary meaning is that of “informal or temporary,” as in *casual wear* or *casual worker*. However, students seem to consider the English term as identical to Spanish *casual*. Thus, a native speaker of English might not understand the use of the adjective *casual* in texts under 71 and 72. As a consequence, some communicative problems might possibly arise. The syntactic use of this word is clearly influenced by the students’ L1. On the other hand, the expression **it is not casual** is a Spanish trace of “no es casual,” meaning that “there is nothing coincidental about that.”

- \* (71) About chance, I want to say that perhaps the first inventions were *casual* ones. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0011.4>
- \* (72) Every people see it and it is not *casual*. It's true that television has influd in children and adults very much. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0006.5>

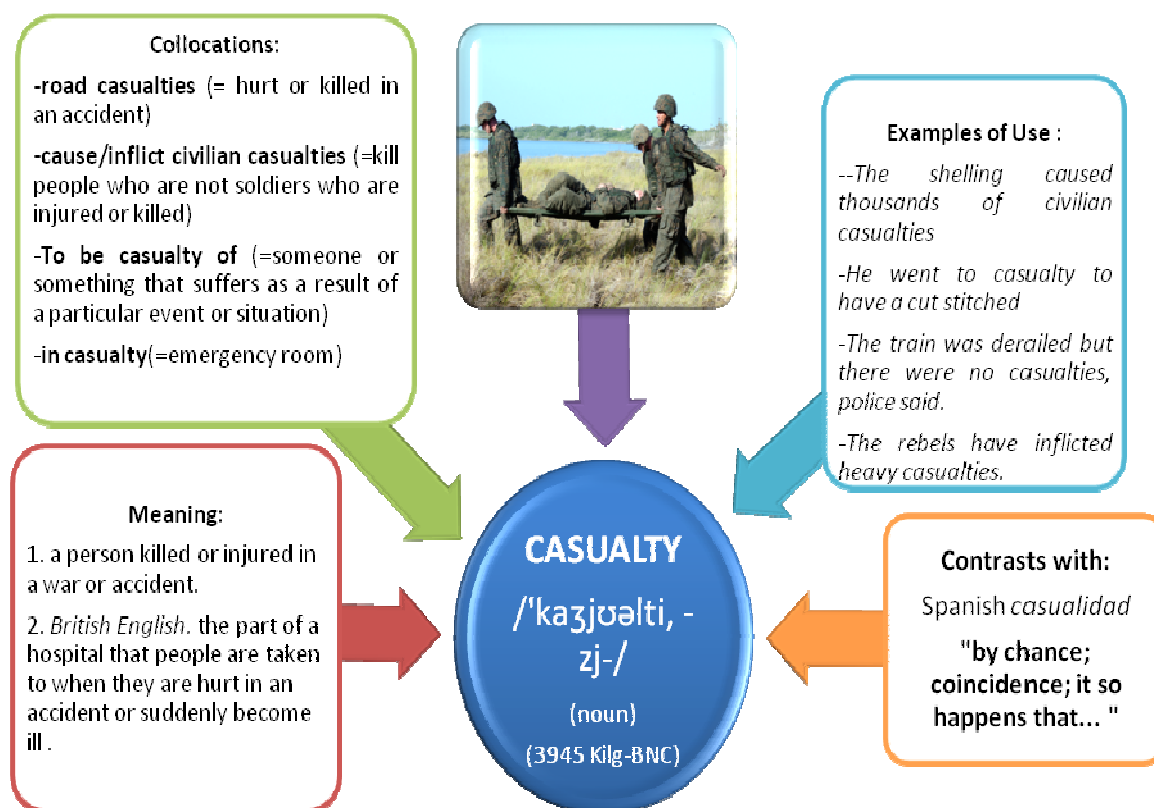
The conclusion drawn from these data is that advanced learners of English have problems with the actual use of the English adjective *casual*, due to the influence of their mother tongue.

► **CASUALTY/-IES**<sup>47</sup> (noun): Origin: late Middle English (in the sense ‘chance, a chance occurrence’): from medieval Latin *casualitas*, from *casualis*

*Casualty* is a total false friend with Spanish. The English noun has nothing to do with the Spanish similar sounding noun *casualidad*, concerning both their meanings and collocations.

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<sup>47</sup> In British English, this noun is used to refer to the department in a hospital where people who are hurt in an accident or suddenly become ill are treated. It is the British equivalent of the American *emergency room*.



A translation of this noun shows how far the meanings of these two words are:

(EN) CASUALTY= (SP) VÍCTIMA; BAJA; (only in U.K.) SERVICIO DE URGENCIAS  
 (SP) CASUALIDAD= (EN) COINCIDENCE

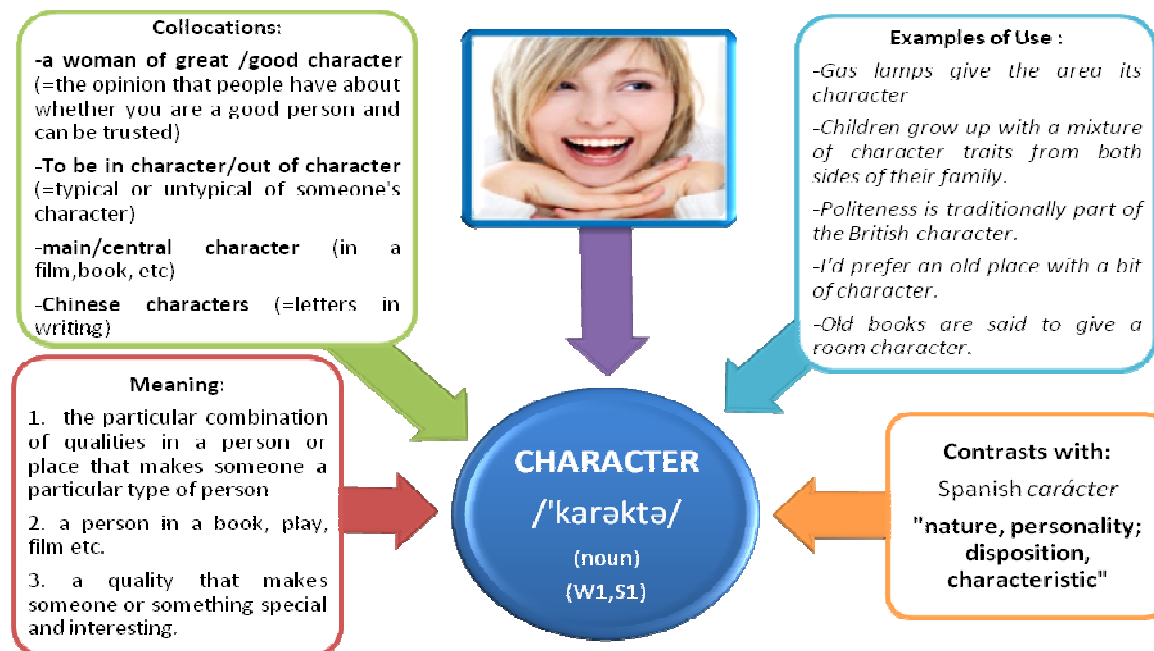
As expected, this noun is misused by Spanish learners of English. They use it to indicate that something is the result of chance. This is made evident in the coordination with “coincidences” in 73. In spite of this, this noun is correctly associated with a war setting in examples 74 and 75.

- × (73) A saint is, according to Shaw, someone who has particular ethic principles which permit him or her to help the others forgetting her devices. In this way miracles will be only a series of *casualties* or coincidences intellectually interpreted to the interest of a determined group (the Church in this case) <ICLE-SP-UCM-0007.6>
- ✓ (74) Any professional soldier would have known that he was not allowed to be there in that moment. It was an accident, of course, but he was a *casualty* of war, a stupid casualty of war <ICLE-SP-UCM-0044.4>
- ✓ (75) Contrary, a professional soldier is better prepared, has a better knowledge about weapons and knows exactly what to do, when and how to do it in each moment. These, of course, is a guarantee of success in any military operation, what has a clear and very important consequence: the fact that less civil and military *casualties* will occur. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0044.4>

This lexical item should receive special attention in the English classroom as the misuse of the noun *casualty* could bring about real communication problems and misunderstandings with native speakers of English. The use of this item in the wrong context could cause surprise or puzzlement to any English speaker who does not know Spanish. For instance, in example 73, the fact that *casualties* appears to be used with a positive connotation, and in close relationship with the noun *miracle*, would sound quite puzzling to an English hearer/reader.

► **CHARACTER**<sup>48</sup> (noun): Origin: Middle English: from Old French *caractere*, via Latin from Greek *kharaktēr* 'a stamping tool'. From the early sense 'distinctive mark' arose 'token, feature, or trait' (early 16th century), and from this 'a description, especially of a person's qualities', giving rise to 'distinguishing qualities'

The English word *character* can be applied to people to convey the idea of the "distinguishing nature of somebody or someone's public reputation" (as in *He is a strange character*) or to people having a role in a play, book or film. In this sense it is different from the Spanish term *carácter* (see the diagram below).



<sup>48</sup> There are slight differences between this English noun and the Spanish word *carácter* (which is most accurately translated into English *personality*). *Carácter* alludes to the way someone behaves towards other people while **character**, makes reference to a natural feature inherent to a particular person which is difficult to change as confirmed by the OED in sense 11 which defines **character** as "the sum of the moral and mental qualities which distinguish an individual or a race, viewed as a homogeneous whole; the individuality impressed by nature and habit on man or nation; mental or moral constitution"

The semantic domains of both terms coincide in many aspects, and differ in some others. English *character* refers to the inner nature of someone or something while the Spanish noun denotes “someone’s personality,” that is, the way people behave towards other people. So the most suitable translations will be the following:

(EN) CHARACTER = (SP) CARÁCTER; PERSONAJE

(SP) CARÁCTER = (EN) NATURE; PERSONALITY

The implications of the Spanish term are basically the same as the ones expressed by the English noun *personality*. As regards its grammar, *character* is uncountable in English, except when it means actor/actress. Hence this word would constitute a potential source of difficulty for Spanish students of English. Examples 76 and 77 show the students’ general problem when it comes to the use of this lexical item.

- × (76) Other inconvenient is the physic change on people: black tooth, to get thinner, yellow fingers and changes of *character*. (SULEC-WP-IL DOCUMENT 910)
- × (77) There are many advantages it the military service (MS) is compulsory: First of all, some people is much more opened to other people from different Spanish areas and by means of the MS, one may know different personalities, *characters* and behaviours of his military companions... <ICLE-SP-UCM-0007.7>

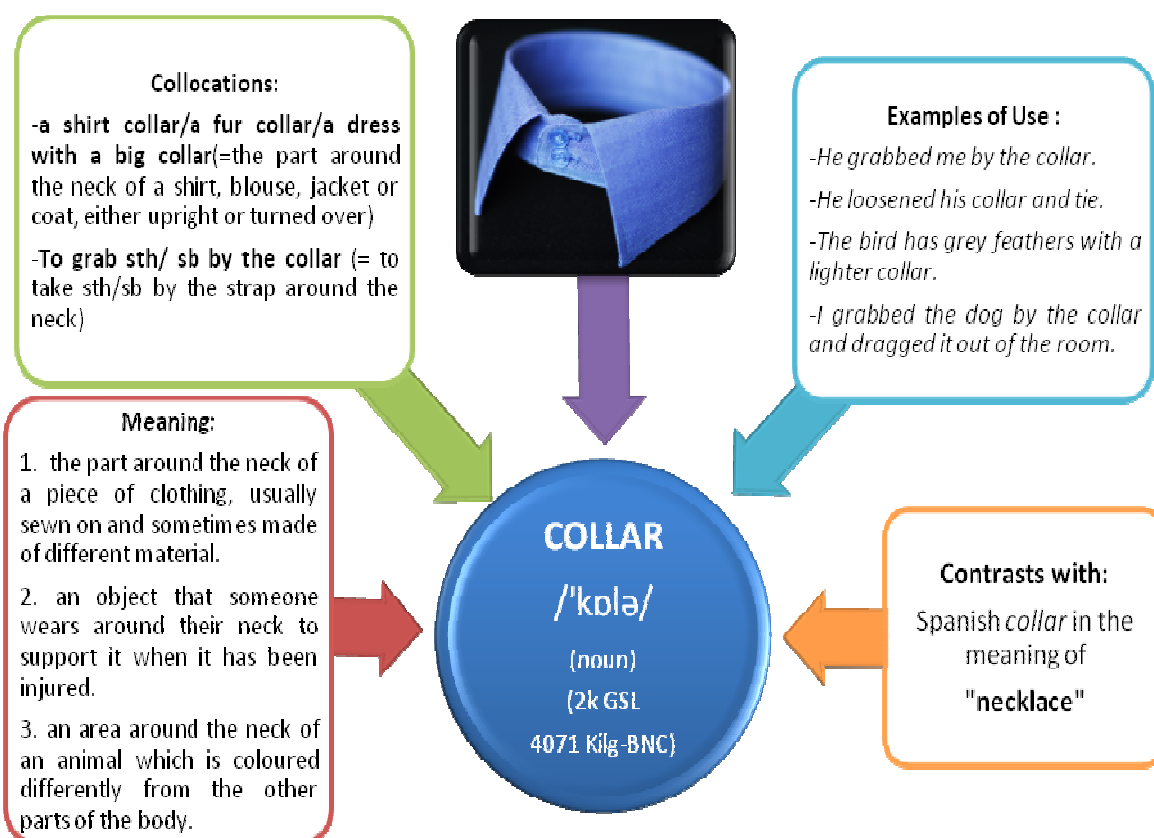
A native speaker of English would not use the word *character* in these examples. Lexical transfer from the mother tongue into the L2 is then here perceived.

In addition to this primary meaning, the English noun *character* is a polysemic word. It may also refer to the actors who play a role in a novel or movie; this is the meaning given to *character* in 78 and 79.

- × (78) In the book "Animal Farm", George Orwell related the history of Communism, from Marx to Stalin, with fiction *characters* that are all animals. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0001.7>
- × (79) But we must not forget we are talking about an animal, that *character* in the film was a mere "animal". <ICLE-SP-UCM-0003.7>

► **COLLAR** (noun): Origin: Middle English: from Old French *colier*, from Latin *collare* 'band for the neck, collar', from *collum* 'neck'

The English word **collar** is identical in its written form to Spanish *collar*. This formal resemblance between Spanish and English does not contribute to the understanding and the accurate use of the term. These two orthographically identical words refer to two different things.



While English **collar** is “the part around the neck of a shirt, coat, dress, blouse, etc,” the Spanish noun refers to a “necklace.”

(EN) COLLAR = (SP) CUELLO DE LA CAMISA

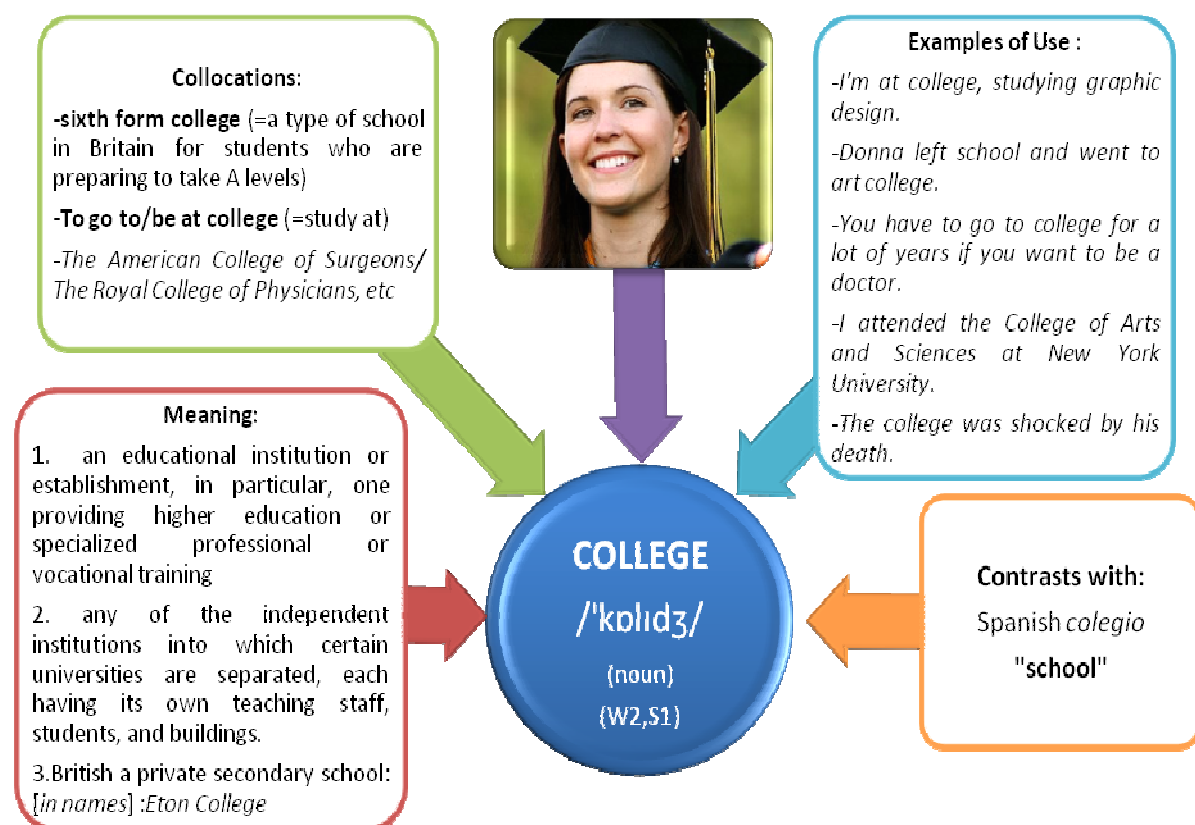
(SP) COLLAR = (EN) NECKLACE

The absence of data in the learner corpora analysed does not allow us to judge if this lexical item is difficult for learners. In order to compensate for this lack of data, the learners’ interpretation and passive knowledge of this noun is tested in the second part of this study (see chapter 4, sections 4.6 and 4.7).



► **COLLEGE** (noun): Origin: late Middle English: from Old French, from Latin *collegium* 'partnership', from *collega* 'partner in office', from *col-* 'together with' + *legare* 'depute.'

English *college* does not refer to the institution where children receive education (except for Cheltenham Ladies' College), which is precisely the concept which the Spanish word *colegio* expresses. This turns the nouns *college* and *colegio* into false friends.



The term *college* denotes “any place for higher education, specialised education after the age of 16, where people study to get knowledge and/or skills” (*a teacher training college*).<sup>49</sup> It can also refer to one of the separate parts into which some universities are divided (*e.g. King's College, Cambridge; the College of Arts and Sciences at New York University*). The most suitable translations will be:

(EN) COLLEGE = (SP) INSTITUTO; COLEGIO UNIVERSITARIO O PROFESIONAL  
(SP) COLEGIO = (EN) SCHOOL

<sup>49</sup> Definition taken from the Cambridge Dictionaries online available at <<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>>

Examples from SULEC show a correct use of the noun *college*, mostly in the sense of highschool.

- ✓ (80) When people come to university, what do they hope to find here? What do they really find? Once the students finish their studies at *college*, all of them are prepared to start a new life at university. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 751)

In ICLE, the noun *college* refers to the world of the university (university colleges) or to where people receive vocational training. Again, these uses are perfectly acceptable and correct.

- ✓ (81) What it should be remarked is that one receives that kind of preparation in everyday life, not in universities or *colleges*. <ICLE-SP-UCM-007.10>

In example 82, the problem is a different one. It does not have anything to do with the phenomenon which we are analysing, that of false friends. It has its origin in the English language itself, not in the similarities or differences existing between English and Spanish. The student confuses the word *college* with a similar lexical item: *colleague*<sup>50</sup> (intralingual confusion). Since this confusion is the result of an intralinguistic problem, this error is not recorded in the chart of the final results.

- \* (82) If some criminal find a job but s/he is not solidary with her/his *colleges*, the teacher will fail on her/his mission. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0014.1>

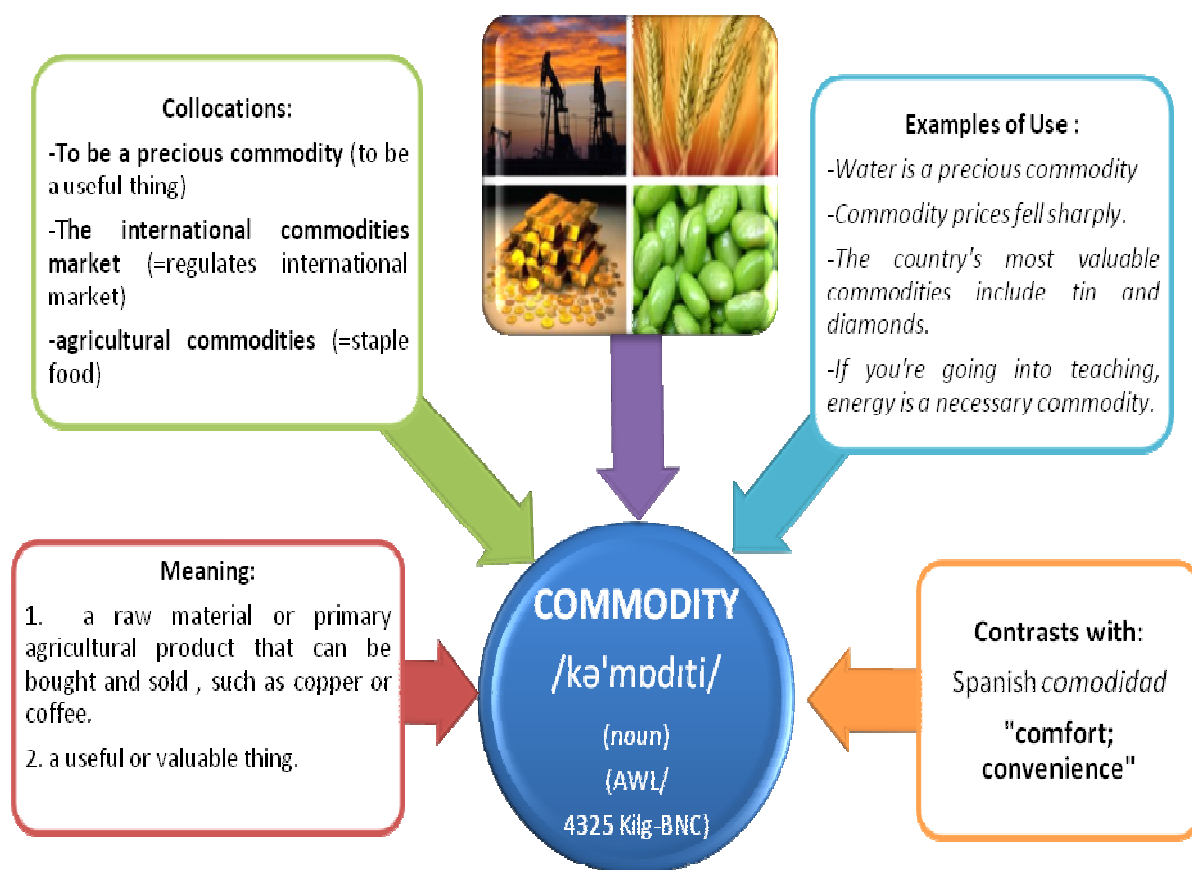
Thus, the results obtained indicate that Spanish learners know what *college* means and the contexts in which this noun is used.

► **COMMODITY** (noun): Origin: late Middle English: from Old French *commodite* or Latin *commoditas*.

This English noun reminds us of Spanish *comodidad*. However, they do not make reference to the same reality.

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<sup>50</sup> *Colleague* denotes “someone you work with” (LODCE)



An insightful translation of these terms could be the following:

(EN) COMMODITY = (SP) PRODUCTO BÁSICO

(SP) COMODIDAD = (EN) COMFORT; CONVENIENCE

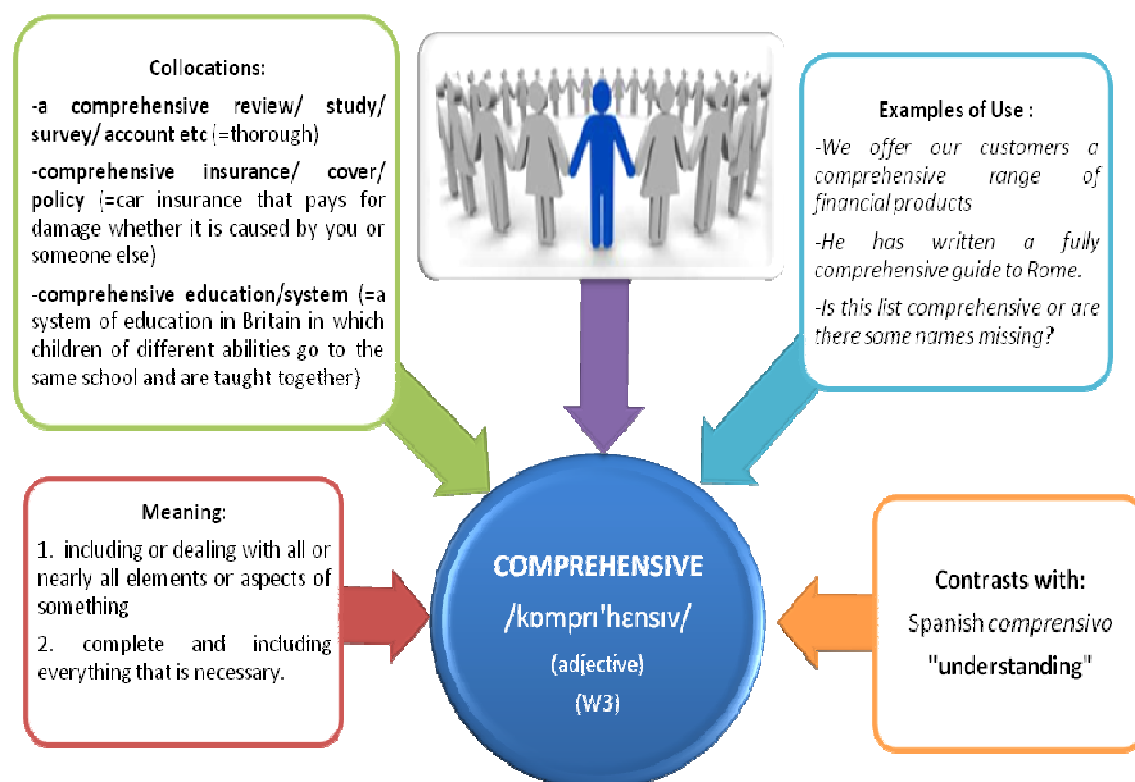
Data from both corpora show that learners use this noun in the wrong sense, that of “comfort.”

- × (83) Nowadays in the middle of this kind of life based in the *comodity* and the try to be in a high level of life, exist still a lot of people or almost all of them that have a dream or an utopia that wish to make real <ICLE-SP-UCM-0041.3>
- × (84) Religion affets to our beliefs and our behaviour, television can also affect with its information in the society. Television has many advantages, such as *comodity* and economy, that make it the most important way of comunication. Television has a great power of calling not only because it gives information, but also because it offers entertainment. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0037.4>

In any case, the concept will be further analysed in the second part of this study when presenting students with examples where *meat* and *bread* are related to the term “commodity” (see chapter 4, sections 4.6.1 and 4.6.2., pp. 354, 386).

► **COMPREHENSIVE** (adjective): Origin: early 17th century: from French *compréhensif*, -ive, from late Latin *comprehensivus*, from the verb *comprehendere* 'grasp mentally'

There are conspicuous formal similarities between Spanish *comprensivo* “understanding” and English *comprehensive*. However, the semantic differences between these two adjectives are also remarkable.



A good and quick way of illustrating the semantic differences between these two words is looking at their translations:

(EN) **COMPREHENSIVE**= (SP) DETALLADO; COMPLETO

(SP) **COMPENSIVO**= (EN) UNDERSTANDING

Spanish students use the English adjective *comprehensive* with the meaning of “understanding” instead of the English meaning “thorough.” Students do not really know the actual use and meaning of this lexical item in the L2. All occurrences of this content word in SULEC are misused and show a clear influence of the mother tongue.

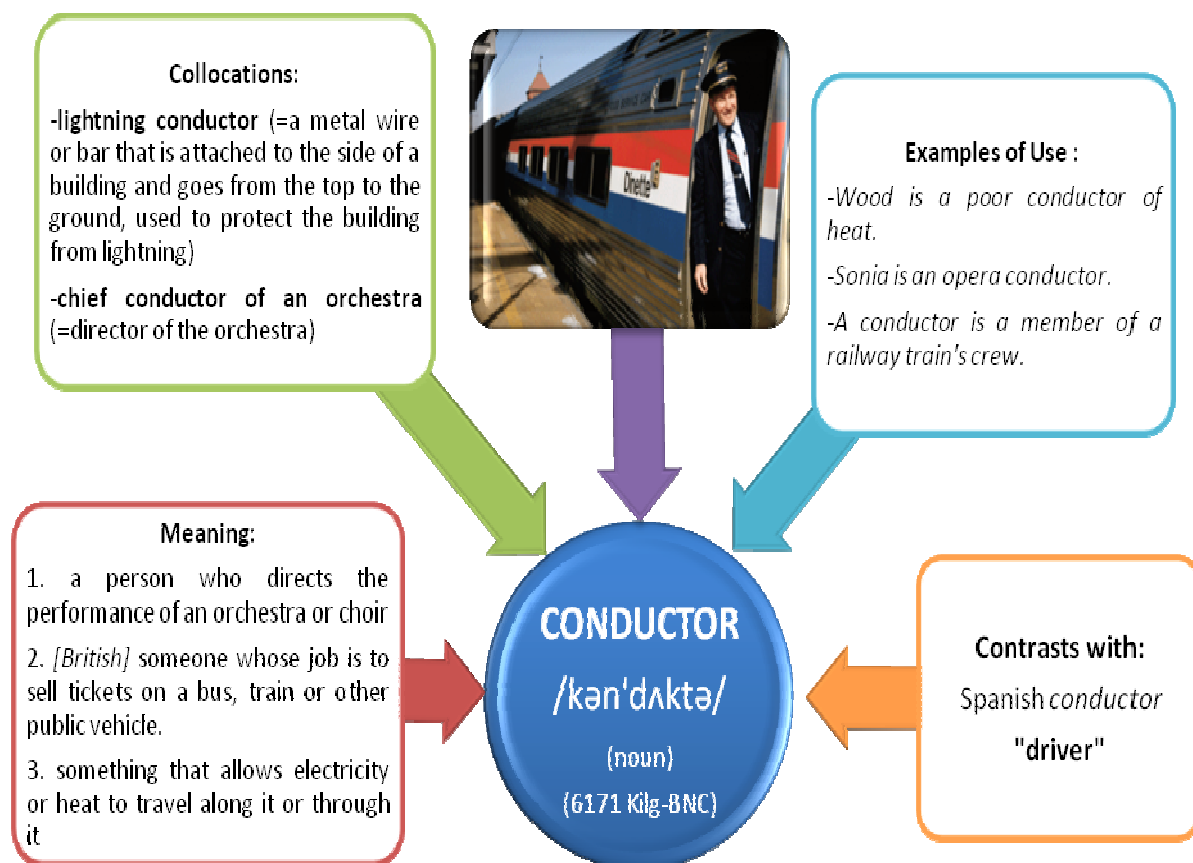
- × (85) **Homosexuals are even more *comprehensive* with their boy/girlfriends because they know better their likes. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 242)**

- × (86) Smokers must be more *comprehensive* and they have to undestand that other people who is in the same restaurant or in the same pub with them maybe feels uncomfortably breathing the smoke of a cigarette. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 593)
- × (87) I think that nowadays every person of the same society must be more *comprehensive* with people that have this type of “sexual tendence” (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 1047)

Language transfer is clearly at work here. There seems to be a strong connection between Spanish *comprensivo* “understanding” and English *comprehensive* in the learners’ minds. Students mistakenly resort to English *comprehensive* to mean “understanding.”

► **CONDUCTOR** (noun): Origin: late Middle English (denoting a military leader): via Old French from Latin *conductor*, from *conducere* 'bring together'

*Conductor* and *conductor* are interlingual homographs. These words should be considered total false friends when they refer to people. However, these nouns are both used to denote something that allows electricity through it (e.g. *lightning conductor*).



In any case, both nouns are translated in a different way:

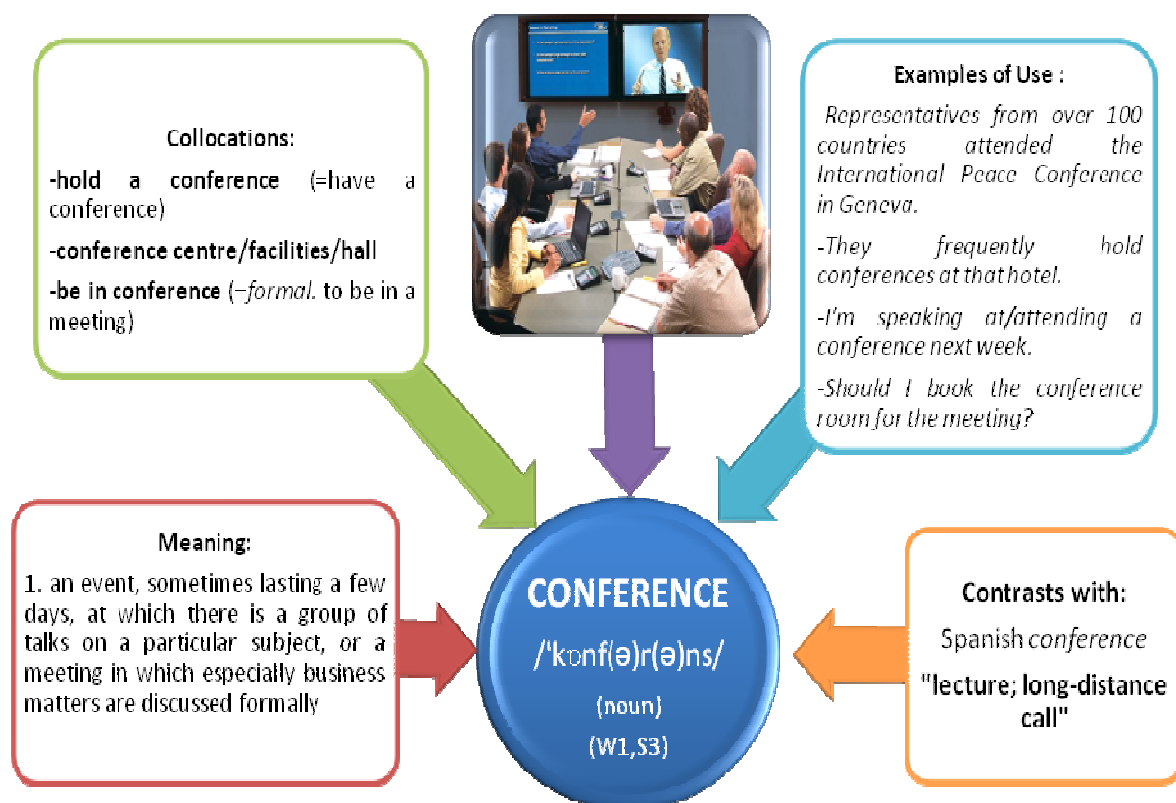
(EN) CONDUCTOR= (SP) DIRECTOR DE ORQUESTA; REVISOR (train); CONDUCTOR (electricity)

(SP) CONDUCTOR = (EN) DRIVER; CONDUCTOR (electricidad)

No instances of this word are recorded in any of the corpora used. There are contexts, especially when learners deal with the topic of driving, where it could easily occur. However, *conductor* is never used to mean “driver.” Therefore, the confusion with the Spanish word *conductor* cannot be seen here, at least, in the data considered. The explanation for this could be that Spanish learners are highly acquainted with the word “driver” and they automatically use it. Further information on this item will be found in the second study (see chapter 4, sections 4.6.1 and 4.6.2., pp. 344-345, 390).

► **CONFERENCE** (noun): Origin: early 16th century (in the general sense ‘conversation, talk’): from French *conférence* or medieval Latin *conferentia*, from Latin *conferre* ‘bring

English *conference* and Spanish *conferencia* are starting to have similar semantic nuances (videoconference-videoconferencia). The primary meaning of English *conference* is that of a meeting or discussion on a particular subject that may last for some days. It is the equivalent of Spanish “congreso.” Spanish *conferencia* basically denotes a “lecture” in general or a “long-distance call.” Although we start seeing cases of “Hay una conferencia en la facultad de biología este verano,” the RAE dictionary does not record this use. In any case, the main semantic features of the English term and its main point of contrast with Spanish are shown in the next page.



The main differences between these words are shown by means of a bidirectional translation here:

(EN) CONFERENCE= (SP) CONGRESO

(SP) CONFERENCIA = (EN) LECTURE; LONG-DISTANCE CALL

In any case, the English noun cannot be used in the sense of “giving a talk or a lecture,” as is often used by Spanish learners of English in their writings.

× (88) if you talk in a *conference* you must talk with a formal language (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 248)

Spanish *conferencia* and English *conference* are closely related. They both refer to formal and academic events. The English term *conference* (a set of lectures) is in a kind of metonymic relationship with Spanish *conferencia*; the former is directly connected to the Spanish word *conferencia* “one talk.” For this reason, sometimes, what Spanish students mean with the word *conference* is not totally clear from the context of their writings.

? (89) Or if I were to act as an interpreter in a *conference*, I would say: “Sorry-but during all my studies I have only listened two or three tapes so

**I cannot understand English or German”. University has to change.  
(SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 298)**

On other occasions, there are obvious examples of linguistic transfer in the use of this lexical item, as in example 90. In this case, the student is making a word-for-word translation of the Spanish phrase *Conferencia Episcopal*. This could be regarded as a communicative strategy on the learner's part (as suggested by the question mark in brackets). Students have different communication strategies or techniques in order to manage situations when their knowledge of the target language is limited. In these situations, learners might resort to different techniques such as topic avoidance, approximations, paraphrase, circumlocutions, appeals for assistance, mime, language shifts or word coinages (Tarone 1981:286). In example 90, the learner seems to make use of the last two strategies: word coinage and language transfer. When resorting to the phrase *Episcopal Conference*, the student is inventing a new word (word coinage), more particularly, a new noun phrase that is based on a L1 item (language transfer).

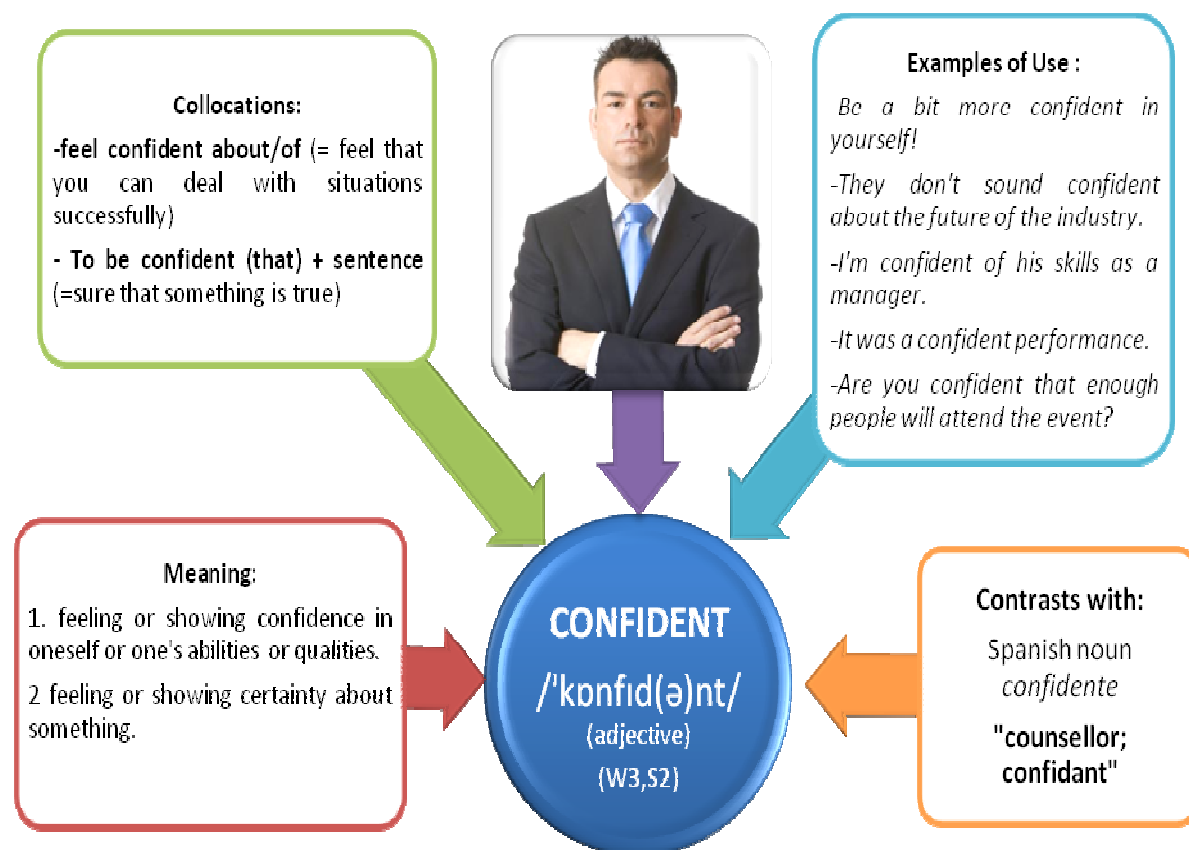
- \* (90) **The Episcopal Conference (?) xx pronounced a speech last week calling the ways of the family and the traditionalism, being opposed to this “new current of barbarians” ... so we have such Christianity in Spain. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 898)**

The qualitative analysis suggests that Spanish students misuse this term regularly as two out of the three examples of this word show an inaccurate use of the term.

► **CONFIDENT** (adjective): Origin: late 16th century: from French *confident(e)*, from Italian *confidente*, from Latin *confident-* 'having full trust', from the verb *confidere*, from *con-* (expressing intensive force) + *fidere* 'trust'

*Confident* and *confidente* are almost identical in form. In spite of this, their meanings are not the same.





The translation below highlights the main semantic divergence between these two similar terms.

(EN) CONFIDENT = (SP) SEGURO (adj)

(SP) CONFIDENTE = (EN) CONFIDANT (noun)

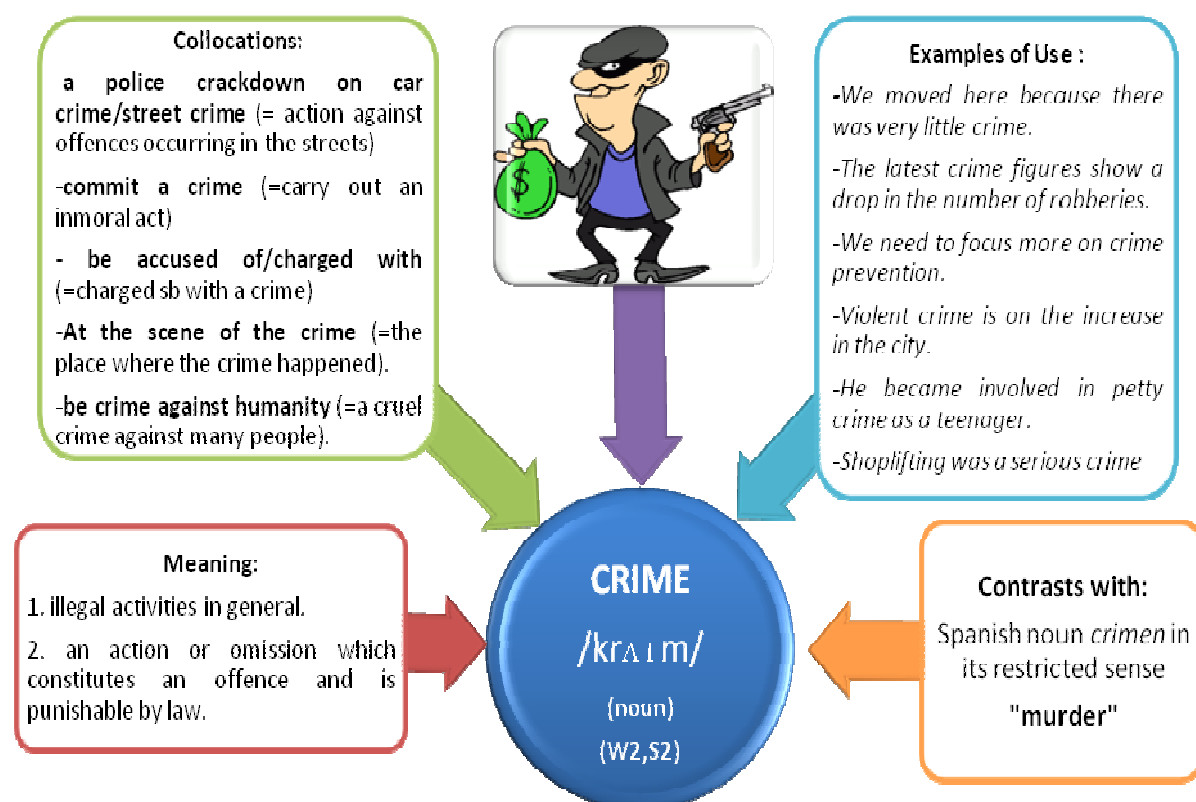
*Confident* is treated as an adjective by Spanish learners and they use it as such. They apply the correct meaning of “having confidence” to this adjective, as shown in the examples below.

- ✓ (91) The society would be more *confident* having criminnals in a safe place <ICLE-SP-UCM-0011.5>
- ✓ (92) Wilde's feminine characters are self-*confident* but under mail authority. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0010.8>
- ✓ (93) Sometimes it looks like the main goal is to make degrees as short as possible instead of a complete and useful degree which makes us feel *confident* and secure when it's time to work. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 1339)

No problems were detected in the use of this adjective. Learners seem to have acquired it in the correct way.

► **CRIME** (noun): Origin: Middle English (in the sense ‘wickedness, sin’): via Old French from Latin *crimen* ‘judgement, offence’

The English word **crime** and Spanish *crimen* look very much alike. However, although there are some overlaps in meaning, the denotative meaning of English **crime** is broader in scope than the Spanish noun.



As seen in the diagram, while the English noun makes reference to almost any kind of illegal act (e.g. robbery, burglary, theft, shoplifting, carjacking, mugging, rape, murder,...), Spanish *crime* basically refers to a serious crime, that of a “murder” or “a very serious offence.”

(EN) CRIME = (SP) DELITO

(SP) CRIMEN = (EN) MURDER

Most examples in learner language are clearly tinged with the Spanish sense of *crime*. However, I only included in the column of wrong uses those instances which are clear cases of the word **crime** being exclusively used as a synonym of “murder.” Example 94 is clear in this sense. The coordination of the nouns *crime* and *robberies* shows that learners are not aware that *robberies* are also a type of crime (or illegal act).

- × (94) We are all responsible for the existence of *crimes* and robberies in the world and we are the only ones who have the power to turn murderers in human beings. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0015.2>

The word *crime* is widely used in SULEC in connection with two main topics: homosexuality and smoking. This word in SULEC is used eleven times. When we analyse learners' writings, it is very difficult to know if they have the English or the Spanish sense in mind. On some occasions, an interpretation of the data is necessary to understand the students' implicit thoughts since the context does not provide enough clues on the learners' intentions. Anyway, the examples below would be perfectly understood by a native speaker of English and they make perfect sense in English. So, they are considered as being correct.

- ✓ (95) For all these opinions the smokers can say that smoking isn't a *crime* and there are many murderers that don't go to prison and why should a smoker go, because the one who dies is himself, so why put tobacco in a law? (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 524)
- ✓ (96) From my point of view, the marriage of persons of the same sex should be allowed (Fortunately, it is allowed right now) because, in my opinion, to be homosexual of lesbian is not a *crime*, and I think that they can have the right of marriage. (...) I would say to those people who don't like the marriage between homosexuals: "They have committed any *crime* to not have the possibility and the right to marriage?." (SULEC-WP-AL-DOCUMENT 772)

In the case of ICLE, we can clearly notice from the learners' use of this noun that they are fully aware of the comprehensive nature of this term. The texts below show the students' concept of the word *crime* (97), examples of crimes (98) and archetypal collocations of this word ("minor crimes" or "war crimes") which make it clear that students have the right concept in their minds or have written these compositions after analysing what *crime* means in English. It is likely that students search for the word *crime* before writing these compositions.

- ✓ (97) A *crime* is a very serious violation of the law, this definition is very general but it is as broad, because there are a lot of kinds of *crimes*. Some examples of *crimes* could be these ones: a) Murder: in this kind of *crime* somebody is killed and perhaps, this is the worst *crime* because if something is robbed it can be recovered but, if someone is killed, that person is not going to live again. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0005.3>
- ✓ (98) In our modern society, a great amount of *crimes* are associated with money. For instance, prostitution means having sex with people in exchange for money; robbery implies an acquisition of money in an illicit way. Other

**examples of this are, illegal traffis of drugs, weapons, political corruption...  
<ICLE-SP-UCM-0024.4>**

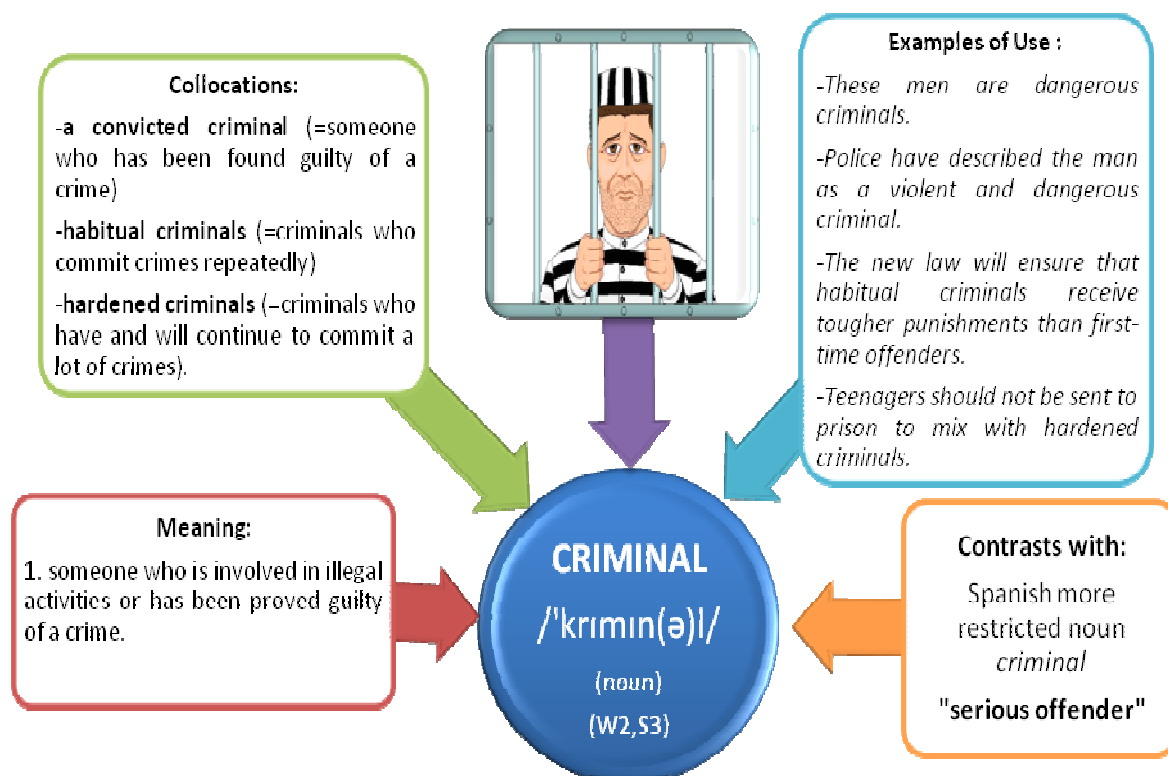
- ✓ **(99) However publicity and marketing are minor "*crimes*" when compared to violence, death, war, deprivation of human rights and other horrors  
<ICLE-SP-UCM-0013.1>**
- ✓ **(100) Prisons without any salubrity are full up with men, women and children; most of them untruly acused by their neighbours of war *crimes*.  
<ICLE-SP-UCM-0018.5>**

On some occasions, it is not clear from the context whether students are being influenced by the Spanish concept of *crimen* or not; yet, the overall impression is that students in ICLE know the concept better than students in SULEC. This might be due to the fact that the topic proposed for the compositions was entitled “Crime does not pay.” This phrase could arouse students’ interest in reading about crime before writing their compositions (the definitions given lead us to think in these terms).

In order to complement these data, the second part of this dissertation includes this word in a visual activity (see chapter 4, sections 4.6.1 and 4.6.2., pp. 345, 385) where students are urged to connect the word *crime* either with a picture of a murder or with one of a theft. The second study will shed some more light on the concept that prevails in the students’ mind.

► **CRIMINAL** (noun): Origin: late Middle English (as an adjective): from late Latin *criminalis*, from Latin *crimen*

*Criminal* and *criminal* are partial false friends which could bring about problems in specific contexts. Problems with this lexical item are not so easy to determine due to the inclusive relationship existing between English *criminal* and its Spanish counterpart. A Spanish *criminal* normally commits a serious crime, that is, a murder. However, an English *criminal* can be a murderer or any other person who is involved in an illegal activity of any kind.



The best translations for these terms would be:

(EN) CRIMINAL = (SP) DELINCUENTE

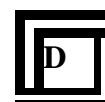
(SP) CRIMINAL = (EN) MURDERER; CRIMINAL

It is important to point out that the problem is to use the term *criminal* with the exclusive sense of “murderer” when students mean just an offender. The communication problems would be more serious when an English person uses the Spanish term *crimen* to denote a robbery. Thus Spanish students tend to use criminal when they mean a murderer rather than when they mean a person who is breaking the law as seen in the following data extracted from the corpora.

- × (101) the people who smoke is persecuted like a *criminal* and this is exaggerated (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 436)
- × (102) Cars and the indudtry make pollution and cause illnesses but not everybody is so worried and they don’t do anything to stop it. Moreover, smokers are looked as if they were *criminals*. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 104)
- × (103) *Criminals* are, in many cases, mad people who are not concious of their acts. A person who murders only for the sake of it should be forced to be helped... <ICLE-SP-UCM-014.10>
- × (104) First of all, a part of the sector of the society is pro prison as a good method to punish the *criminals*. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth; if someone kills s/he has to be killed <ICLE-SP-UCM-0009.1>

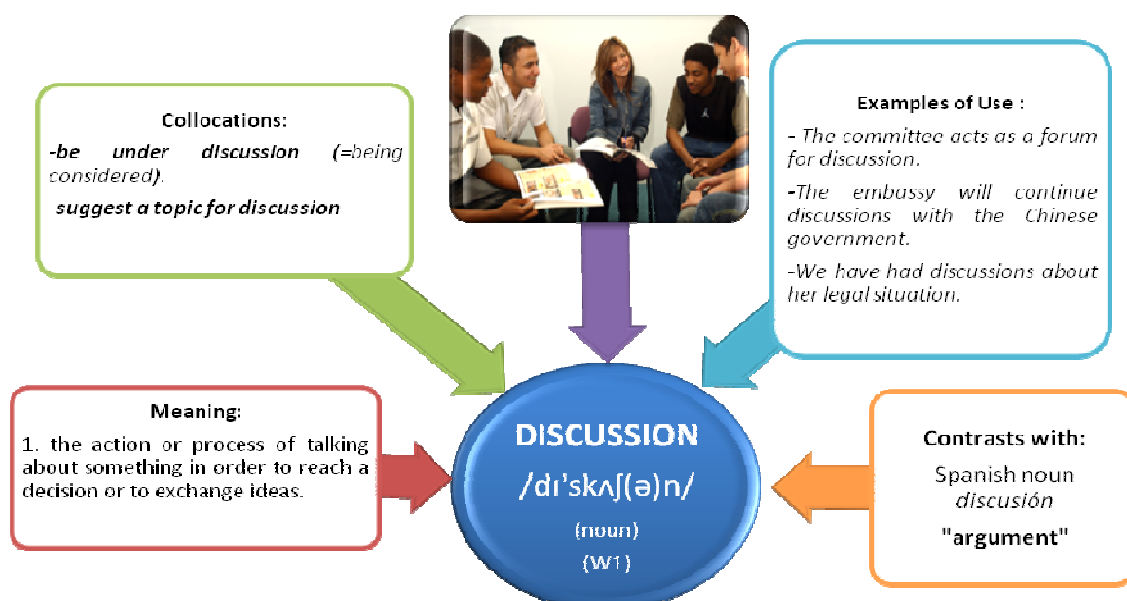
Although nowadays in Spain, smokers can be criminals when they smoke in a public place (a law was passed in 2011 which forbids smoking in public places). At the moment of the compilation of these corpora, this law did not exist and therefore smokers could not be considered as criminals. They could freely smoke anywhere and they were not involved in any illegal activity. In fact, there are some examples in which this word sticks to and respects the English meaning completely.

- ✓ (105) **Pedagogues, psychiatrists and teacher are looking for the best ways of training *criminals* for working life. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0014.1>**
- ✓ (106) **The aim of this paper is to discuss whether the prison sy system is outdated and what should a civilised society do with its *criminals* to rehabilitate them <ICLE-SP-UCM-0011.5>**
- ✓ (107) **Murderers and *criminals* are all allowed to marry and procreate freely (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 1350)**
- ✓ (108) **permissions can be very dangerous for citizes since some *criminals*, specially killers and rapists, make a crime again for these days of permission <ICLE-SP-UCM-0036.4>**



► **DISCUSSION** (noun): Origin: Middle English (denoting judicial examination): via Old French from late Latin *discussio(n)-*, from *discutere* 'investigate'

**Discussion** and *discusión* are not so distant in meaning as some years ago. The Spanish noun appears to have acquired the English sense of exchanging views on a topic. In spite of this, there are some semantic differences.



The Spanish term can be used to mean “quarrel or argument.” The translation below shows the main point of contrast between English and Spanish.

(EN) DISCUSSION= (SP) DISCUSIÓN (“tratar algún asunto”)

(SP) DISCUSIÓN= (EN) ARGUMENT; DISCUSSION

Data from both corpora indicate that the English word *discussion* is correctly used in the written production of Spanish learners. In fact, there is only one single case that clearly shows traces of semantic transfer. In this case, the student resorts to the phrase *\*familiar discussions* instead of *family arguments*. The latter would be a more suitable option if we take into account the negative tone that prevails in the text (e.g. *annoyance, trouble, etc*).

- \* (109) **not seeing the television suposse an annoyance of the child and a trouble for the parents. Like we see it is a motive of familiar *discussions*** <ICLE-SP-UCM-0006.5>

On the other hand, the neutral connotations of this noun are preserved in many of the texts in which it appears. The idea of exchanging views and opinions on a particular topic, with no need of arguing, is shown, for instance, in examples 110 and 111.

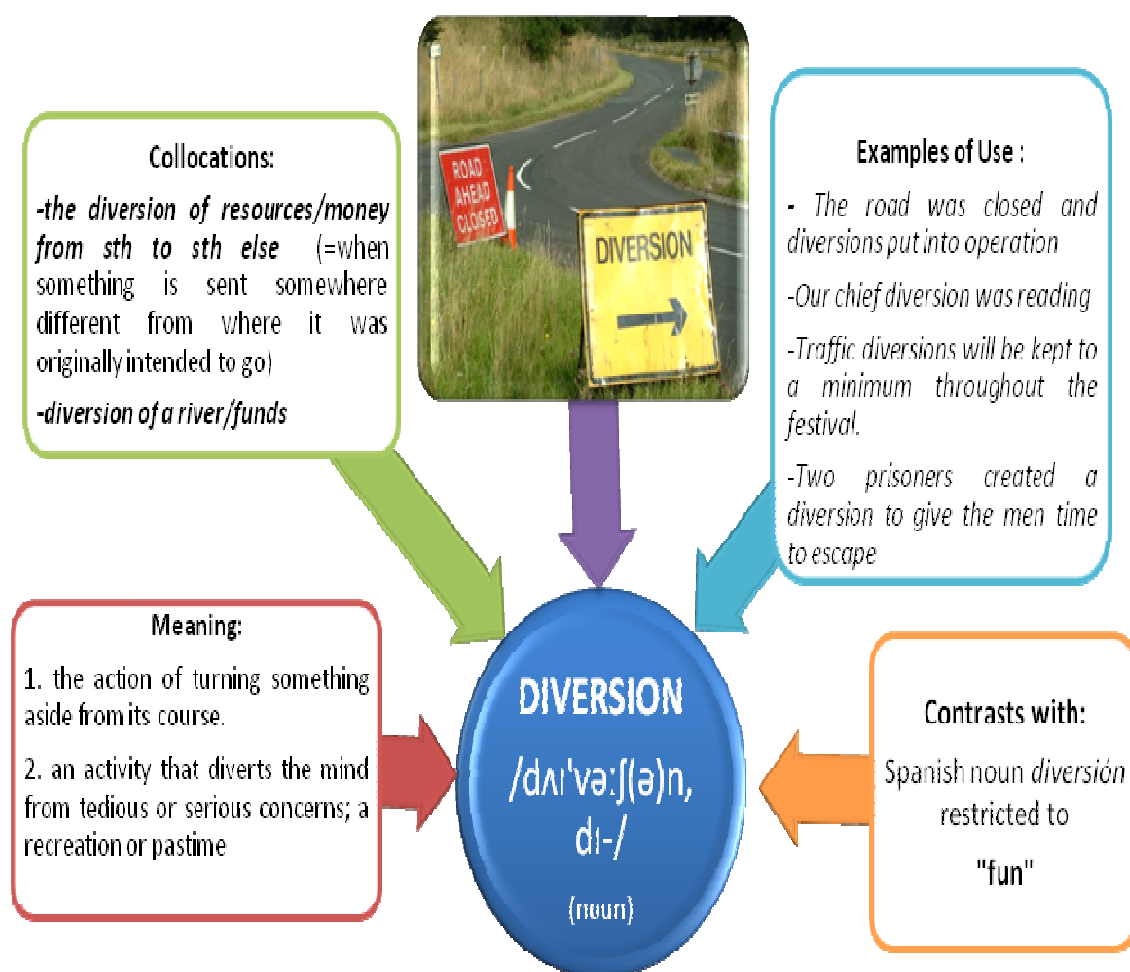
- ✓ (110) **Human nature has always been a matter of *discussion*, do we behave well? Do we do it bad?** (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 144)
- ✓ (111) **Shaw's theatre is very little dramatic and very discursive, he is not interested in action but in *discussion*.** <ICLE-SP-UCM-0009.6>

The results obtained show that this lexical item is not problematic for Spanish learners. Students do not generally draw a clear parallelism between the Spanish word *discusión* and the English item *discussion*. In fact, 39 out of the 40 examples found in the corpora are correct. This might be mostly due to the secondary meaning of the Spanish word *discusión* “debate,” which is very closely related to the real sense of English *discussion*.

► **DIVERSION** (noun): Origin: late Middle English: from late Latin *diversio(n-)*, from Latin *divertere* 'turn aside'

*Diversion* is a word used in British English which refers to an alternative route for the traffic when the usual roads are closed. This word is orthographically identical, except for the accent, to the Spanish noun *diversión* (“fun” in English), except for the

orthographic accent. However, the primary meanings of these lexical items are quite far from each other.



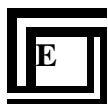
Although English **diversion** can denote “fun,” the main sense is that of marking an alternative path on a road.

(EN) DIVERSION = (SP) DESVÍO

(SP) DIVERSIÓN = (EN) FUN

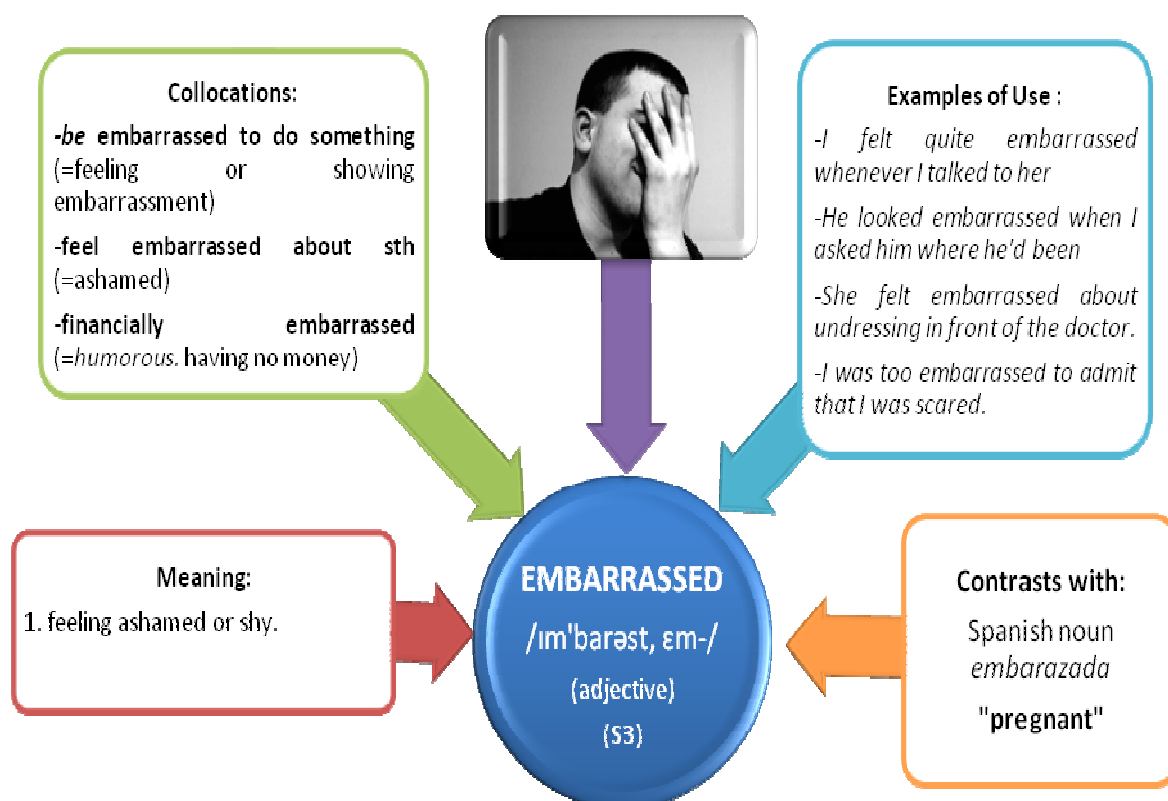
There are no hits of this word in the corpora analysed. Despite this, this word is very likely to be problematic for Spanish learners of English especially in terms of reception/comprehension. For this reason, the second part of this study includes an activity in which students are asked to translate a road sign in which this word occurs (see chapter 4, sections 4.6.1 and 4.6.2., pp. 364, 390). The activity will show how Spanish learners of English would interpret it.





► **EMBARRASSED** (adjective): Origin: early 17th century: from French *embarrasser*

The English adjective *embarrassed* is usually listed as a funny false friend in the literature of false friends between English and Spanish. It can be confused with the Spanish word *embarazada*, which means “pregnant.”



The corresponding translations of this pair of words will be:

(EN) EMBARRASSED = (SP) AVERGONZADO

(SP) EMBARAZADA = (EN) PREGNANT

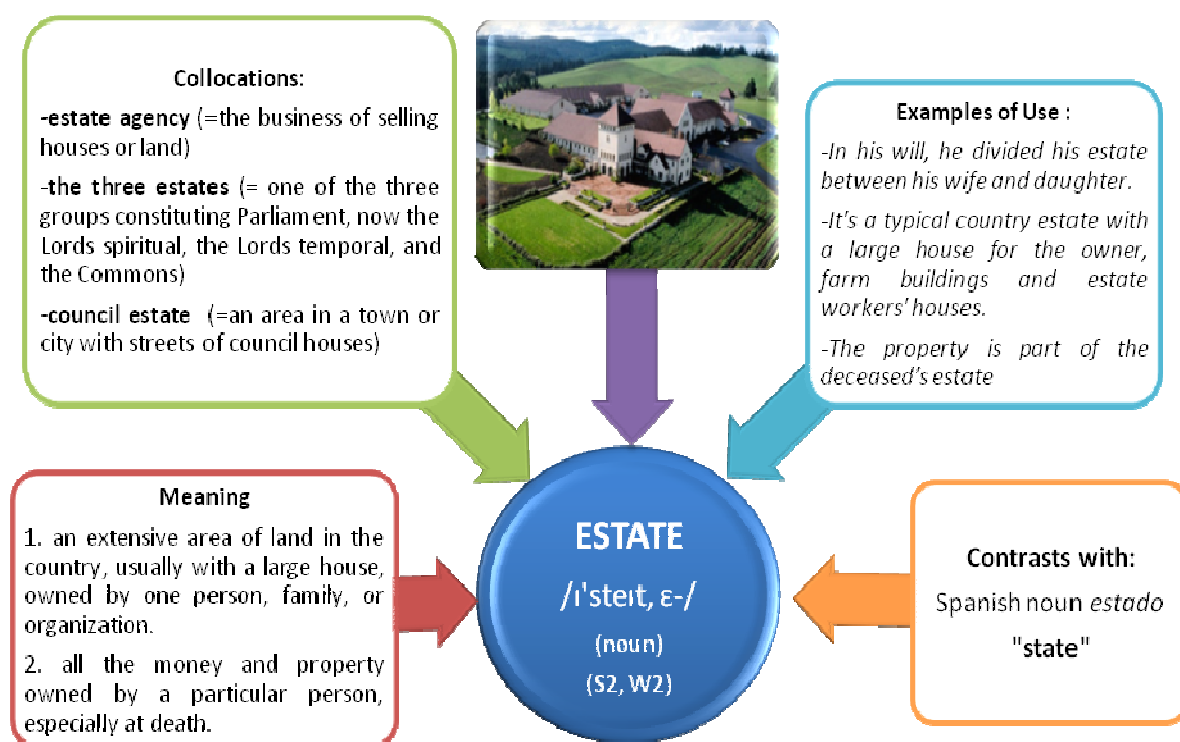
Contrary to what has been suggested in the literature of this term, the adjective *embarrassed* is appropriately used by Spanish learners as can be seen in 112 and 113. The existence of Spanish *embarazoso/a*, very similar in form and meaning to this English item, and the early introduction of this adjective in the English class may have a bearing on the right use of this word.

- ✓ (112) I usually refer to their mother or sister in order to make them realised that I'm also a human being. For example, if a man says "Nice tits", I say "Would you like your mother or sister being said that?". But also depends on my mood, sometimes my answer is a little bit "stronger". The man usually feels uncomfortable and *embarrassed*. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0005.2>
- ✓ (113) That isn't right that these xx people feel *embarrassed* by their sexual condition (SULEC-WP-AL-DOCUMENT 897).

Students appear to have interiorised the English meaning of the item without appealing to their mother tongue. Perhaps, this is due to the fact that this adjective is usually introduced, when dealing with emotions and reactions, at early stages of second language acquisition.

► **ESTATE** (noun): Origin: Middle English (in the sense 'state or condition'): from Old French *estat*, from Latin *status* 'state, condition', from *stare* 'to stand.'

The English noun *estate* ("property") does not have the same meaning as the Spanish similar word *estado* ("government"). The figure below defines the word, its main collocations and some examples of use.



*Estate* and *estado* have different meanings as well as different translations:

(EN) ESTATE = (SP) FINCA; HACIENDA

(SP) ESTADO = (EN) STATE

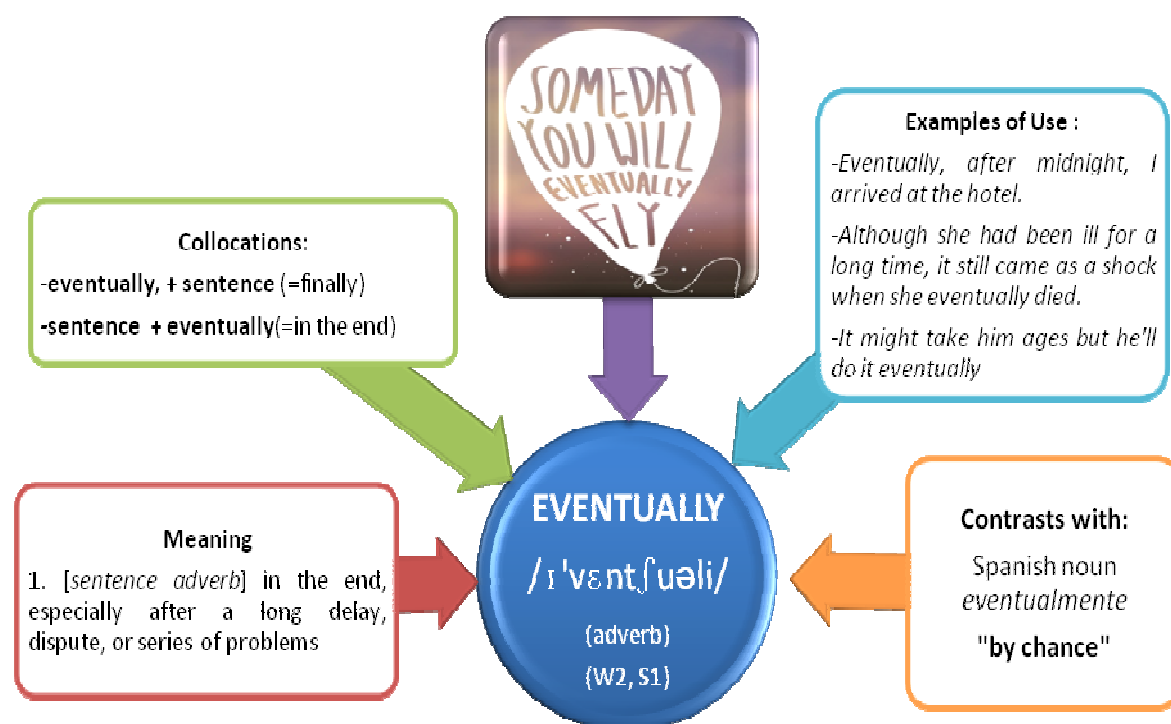
Data in the corpora show that Spanish learners tend to use *estate* to refer to the political government as illustrated in the following examples.

- × (114) In the present age, due to the grants which the *estate* concedes to the students that have not enough economical mediums, going to university is whithin everybody's reach. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0001.3>
- × (115) It seems most governments are stubbornly stuck in this tradition-chauvinist view of the family as the main pillar for *estates'* health Mr. George Bush is preaching (SULEC-WP-IL-508)

The mother tongue might have influenced the use of this word in a different sense. The lack of bare consonant clusters at word initial position in Spanish, and the tendency to add an *e-* before typically English clusters, such as *sp-* or *st-*, might explain the use of this word. In fact, it is very likely that most Spanish learners who have never been in an English-speaking country do not know about the real existence of this word in English. The second part of the study will check the students' knowledge of this word by asking them to translate the phrase *estate agents* (see chapter 4, sections 4.6.1 and 4.6.2., pp. 365, 386).

► **EVENTUALLY** (adverb): Origin: early 17th century (in the sense 'relating to an event or events'): from Latin *eventus* + *LY* suffix

The English adverb *eventually* and the Spanish similar adverb *eventualmente* are used in different contexts, and their meanings are also different.



Two plausible translations of these adverbials are the following:

(EN) EVENTUALLY = (SP) FINALMENTE

(SP) EVENTUALMENTE = (EN) OCCASIONALLY

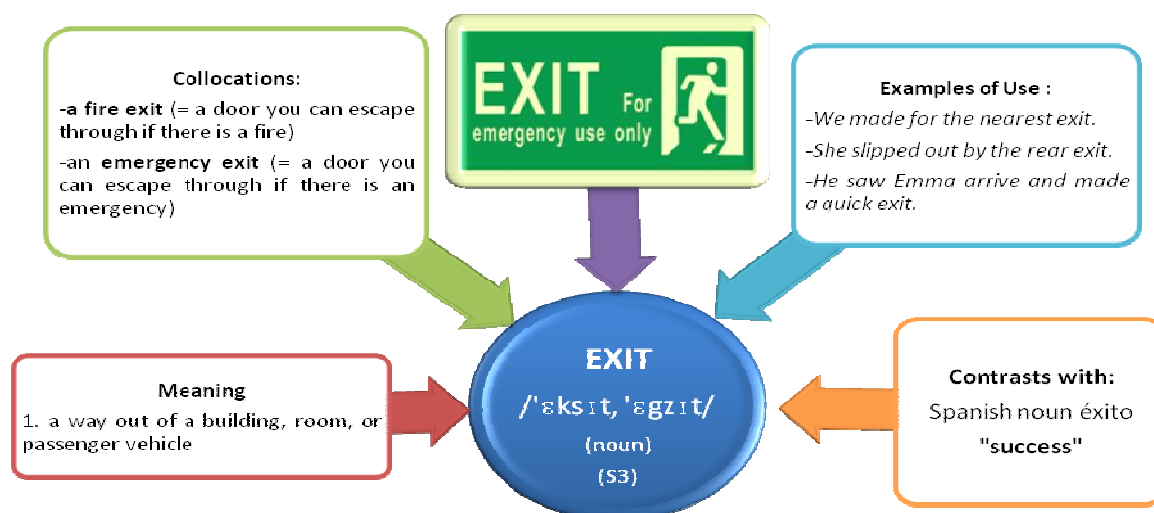
*Eventually* is recorded fourteen times in the two corpora. This word is correctly used in nine out of the ten examples in SULEC, and in four out of four instances in ICLE. Example 116 shows the right use of the word in a written text dealing with university degrees and professional careers.

- ✓ (116) Most university degrees last for 3 or 5 years. After having spent all this time learning theory about how to work in a company, for example when you *eventually* start working at a company you realize you don't know anything at all about it (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 292)

The use and meaning of this adverb is not influenced by the Spanish similar adverb *eventualmente* (meaning “from time to time”). Lack of serious mistakes in the use of this English adverbial might be due to the fact that it is normally introduced at intermediate levels where learners are told to take it as a synonym for “finally.” In addition to this, the Spanish similar adverb *eventualmente* is quite formal and is not commonly used by the average Spanish speaker on a daily basis. So the connection between the two terms is not so strong as with other terms, such as, for instance, *actually* and *actualmente*, both extensively used in the L1 and the L2.

► **EXIT** (noun): Origin: late 16th century from Latin *exitus* 'going out'

As far as meaning is concerned, the noun *exit* has nothing to do with the Spanish noun *éxito*.



The English noun *exit* and Spanish *éxito* make reference to two distinct issues, as shown in their translations below.

(EN) EXIT = (SP) SALIDA

(SP) ÉXITO = (EN) SUCCESS

Although I did not expect to find incorrect uses of this noun (this is a high-frequency word that is commonly seen in public buildings in Spain, namely to indicate *emergency exits*), there is one piece of writing by an intermediate student in which the word *exit* is misused. This text illustrates a conspicuous case of semantic transfer where the resulting utterance makes no sense in English.

- × (117) **On the other hand, this program is bad for the famous singers in Spain, because the contestants of “Fame Academy” have more *exit* that they. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 177).**

In contrast with this example, there are other instances in which the noun *exit* is correctly used to refer to an “exit door.”

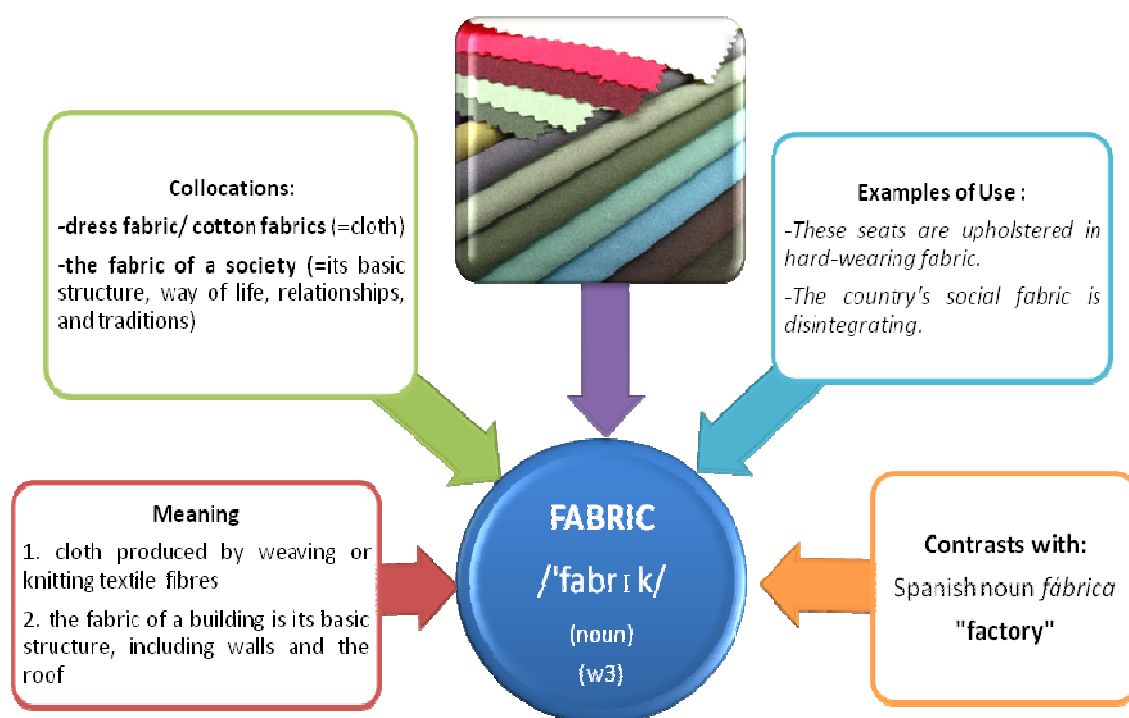
- ✓ (118) (...) **they spend their free time smoking in the corridors, and don’t read the panels which are situated in the *exit* of these places (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 788)**
- ✓ (119) (...) **there is not reading and no *exits* to Theatres Cinemas and places like these <ICLE-SP-UCM-0006.5>**



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► **FABRIC** (noun): Origin: late 15th century: from French *fabrique*, from Latin *fabrica* 'something skillfully produced', from *faber* 'worker in metal, stone, etc.' The word originally denoted a building, later a machine, the general sense being 'something made'.

English *fabric* and Spanish *fábrica* exhibit a high degree of orthographic similarity. In spite of this, their meanings differ in a lot of respects.



The translations of these two terms give evidence of the semantic divergence between these nouns:

(EN) FABRIC = (SP) TELA, TEJIDO

(SP) FÁBRICA = (EN) FACTORY

There are two examples in the corpora which contain this word in the plural (*fabrics*). They show the influence of the Spanish word *fábrica* (“factory”) clearly. The inaccurate use of English *fabric* (meaning “cloth”) does not make sense in 120 and 121. Therefore, it might bring about communication misunderstandings between native and non-native speakers of English. An English person who does not know Spanish will not understand what the Spanish person tries to say with the noun *fabric*.

- × (120) In more *fabrics* the smoke people have got a special place to smoke, in other industries they exit for smoke, but it isn't a solution, because the lose more time. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 916)
- × (121) By the other hand, people complains because cigarrets cause pollution, but our cities are full of pollution. What about cars, and *fabrics*? (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 222)

► **FACILITIES** (plural noun): Origin: early 16th century (denoting the means or unimpeded opportunity for doing something): from French *facilité* or Latin *facilitas*, from *facilis* 'easy'

The plural noun *facilities* “amenities” has little to do with Spanish *facilidades* “favourable conditions.” In this study, particular attention will be given to this plural form because its corresponding singular *facility* “having the capacity/ ability for something” is quite similar in use to the Spanish noun *facilidad*.



The correct translations of these plural nouns are:

(EN) FACILITIES = (SP) INSTALACIONES

(SP) FACILIDADES = (EN) FAVOURABLE CONDITIONS

Spanish students use the plural noun *facilities* for financial support or for any kind of support received which makes life easier. The following examples extracted from the two learner corpora illustrate this idea. However, the use of this word in this context would mean something different to an English speaker.

- \* (122) I think the government should give them all that they need and to give them all *facilities*. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 400)
- \* (123) if they change their body they could marriage with more *facilities* (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 1211)
- \* (124) The first one says that they are an institution that teaches and examines students in many branches of advanced learning, awrading

degrees and providing *facilities* for academic research <ICLE-SP-UCM-0010.7>

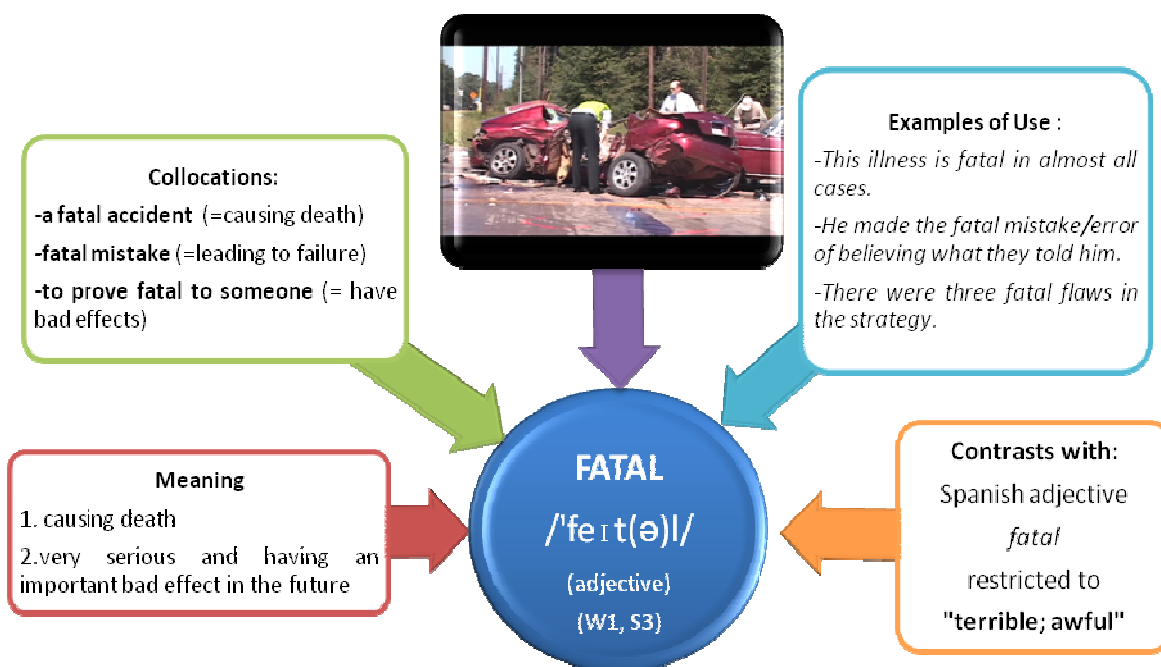
- \* (125) Our claim focuses on *facilities* such as grants scholarships and the like, some of us have the great opportunity of having one of those (even some have had two. Is this fair? <ICLE-SP-UCM-0011.1>
- \* (126) In studies of languages, the University doesn't proporcionate the students enough *facilities* for studying in a country in which the language they are learning is spoken. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0022.4>

This plural noun has a different meaning in English. It refers to the buildings which have a specific purpose (e.g. shopping facilities, sports facilities). This notion is also illustrated in learner language.

- ✓ (127) the town hall or city hall could make build pubs, caffés, restaurants or other public *facilities*. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 524)

► **FATAL** (adjective): Origin: late Middle English (in the senses ‘destined by fate’ and ‘ominous’): from Old French, or from Latin *fatalis*, from *fatum* “that which has been spoken.”

In present-day English, *fatal* may imply the idea of “producing death.” By contrast, Spanish *fatal* has the meaning of “awful.” It does not necessarily have something to do with actual death. Thus, “estoy fatal” in Spanish means “I feel horrible.”



The translations of these adjectives may be helpful to grasp the main meaning distinctions in these adjectives:



(EN) FATAL = (SP) MORTAL; HORRIBLE

(SP) FATAL = (EN) AWFUL

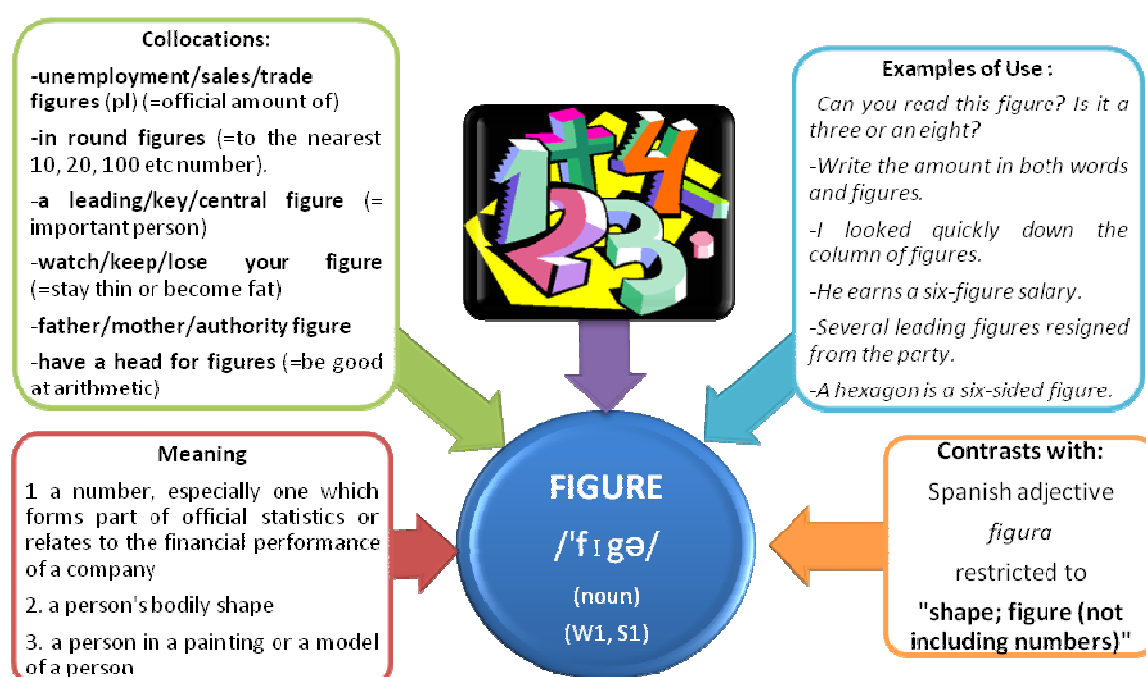
The sample sentences in the corpora in which this adjective occurs are all correct.

- ✓ (128) **People seem to be more aware now of the fact that exceeding the speed allowed is dangerous and can have *fatal* consequences.** (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 1304)

The Spanish adjective has a more restricted sense than its English homograph *fatal*. The English term covers the whole range of meanings of the Spanish adjective. This might be the explanation for the absence of errors in this particular word. In this case, it would be more likely to find some mistaken uses of Spanish *fatal* in the productions of English learners. English people might resort to the Spanish adjective *fatal* in cases where *mortal* would be more suitable.

► **FIGURE** (noun): Origin: Middle English (in the senses ‘distinctive shape of a person or thing’, ‘representation of something material or immaterial’, and ‘numerical symbol’, among others): from Old French *figure* (noun), *figurer* (verb), from Latin *figura* ‘shape, figure, form’; related to *figere* ‘form, contrive’

*Figure* and *figura* are partial false friends and share some meanings, as can be inferred from the explanatory diagram which follows:



The translations provided allow us to see the semantic similarities and differences between these two words:

(EN) FIGURE = (SP) TIPO; FIGURA; CIFRA

(SP) FIGURA = (EN) FIGURE; BIG NAME

Regarding the data in the corpora, this noun frequently occurs in compositions on the topic of homosexuality, when students talk about the need of having both a maternal and a paternal figure. In this sense, *figure* is correctly used, as can be seen from the following sample from SULEC.

- ✓ (129) because boys and girls need mother and father *figure* in their lifes. (SULEC-WP-AL-DOCUMENT 497)
- ✓ (130) A child needs to have a paternal and a maternal *figure* (SULEC-WP-AL-DOCUMENT 733)

However, *figure* is also misused when used in connection with the topic of marriage. Students seem to use the phrase “holy figure” in the place of a more neutral phrase “meaningful event.”

- ✗ (131) the civil marriage is bassed in the cristian one. Maybe, this civil *figure* wouldn't be called "marriage", but "civil union" that minds a civil recognicement of the union between two person (maybe the union between three people). The marriage is holly, and as a holly *figure* must be kept. The best would be everybody were more sensible and plain spoken... (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 1061)

In ICLE, many texts contain the word “figure.” This word is mostly used to refer to numbers and about the figures of speech that professional poets and writers may use in their works. In this last case, using *figures* instead of *figures of speech* (Spanish “figuras retóricas”) could be understood differently but the context clarifies its meaning so it is considered as correct.

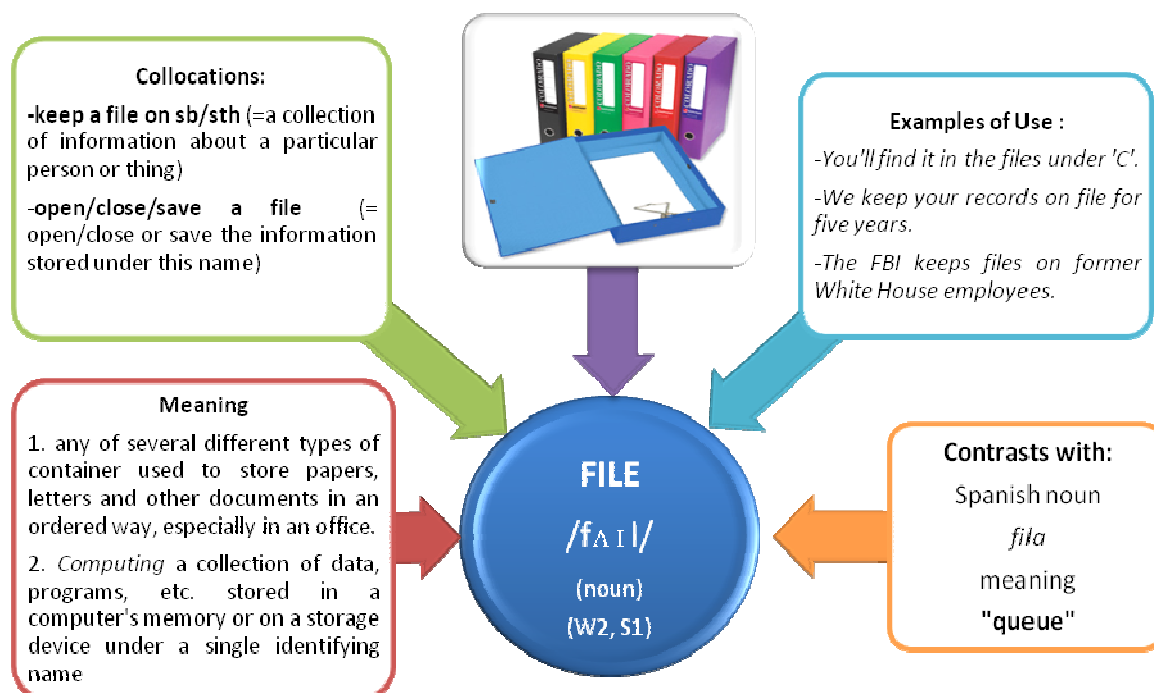
- ✓ (132) The following *figures* will help you to understand how necessary is to act immediately: In 1950, 30% of the earth was covered by tropical forest; by 1975, only 12% was left. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0022.3>
- ✓ (133) Symbols of death = spikes, maggots, 2) I think the poem is quite conventional. The *figures* that the poet is using have been very used along the time by different writers. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0006.9>

In ICLE, there are also other uses of this noun. Some learners resort to this noun to mean “shape or ghost.”

- ✓ (134) **Hermione invites art because she looks like an statue and art invites nature because it represents real *figures*, elements of nature, ... etc. <ICLE-SP-ALC-0002.1>**
- ✓ (135) **The king, Leontes, spends sixteen years on his own till at the end his wife appears as a *figure*. In fact it is her, who never died. <ICLE-SP-ALC-0010.1>**

► **FILE** (noun): Origin: late Middle English (as a verb meaning 'string documents on a thread or wire to keep them in order'): from French *filer* 'to string', *fil* 'a thread', both from Latin *filum* 'a thread'.

*File* and *fila* are orthographic false friends. In spite of their graphic similarities, their spoken forms differ a lot, so do their conceptual meanings.



The meanings of these two nouns differ quite a lot, as shown by the following translations:

(EN) FILE = (SP) LIMA DE UÑAS; ARCHIVO; FICHERO

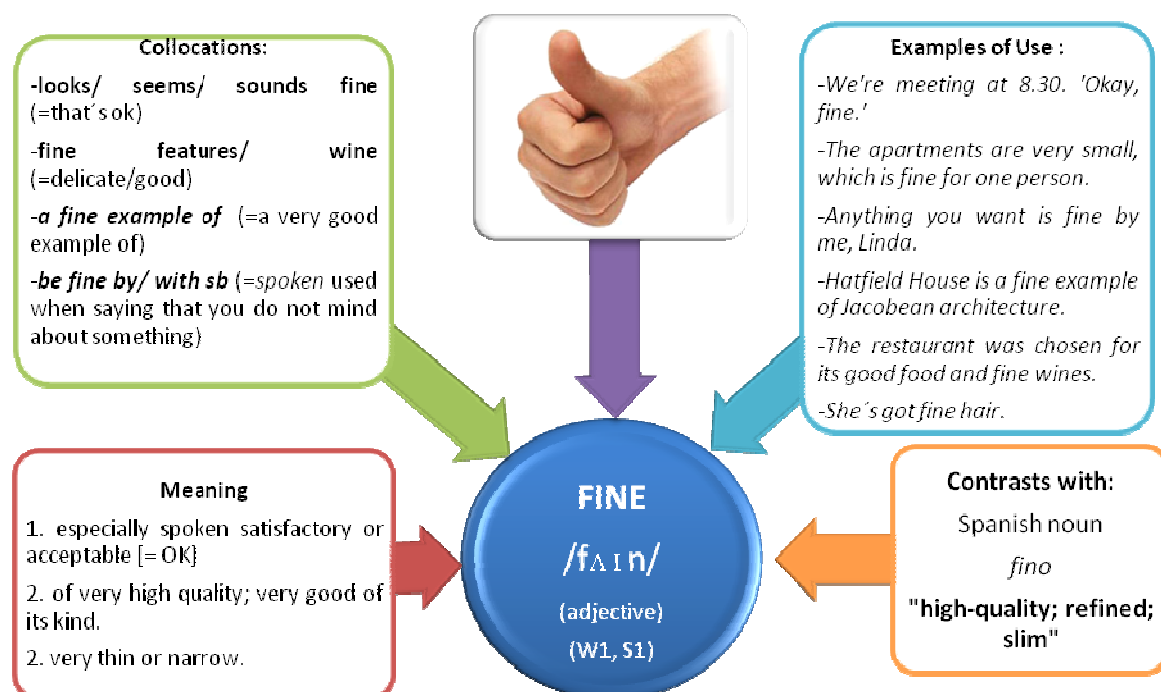
(SP) FILA= (EN) QUEUE; LINE

This high-frequency item is not recurrent in the students' writings. In fact, there are only two instances of the word *file*; Spanish students use this lexical item correctly in both cases.

- ✓ (136) It's possible that I would be a very exaggerated person (maybe because I watched "X File"), but my opinion is that there are too many thinks that the government can do, and that they don't want to do. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 222)
- ✓ (137) (...) offices *files* or similars (...) have been replace by wonderful computers. Industrialisation brought with it mass production.<ICLE-SP-UCM-0002.3>

► **FINE** (adj): Origin: Middle English: from Old French *fin*, based on Latin *finire* 'to finish'

*Fine* and *fino* are partial false friends. The figure below shows it.



The most common translations for these adjectives are:

(EN) FINE = (SP) DELICADO; REFINADO, FINO; EXCELENTE

(SP) FINO= (EN) THIN; SLENDER; FINE

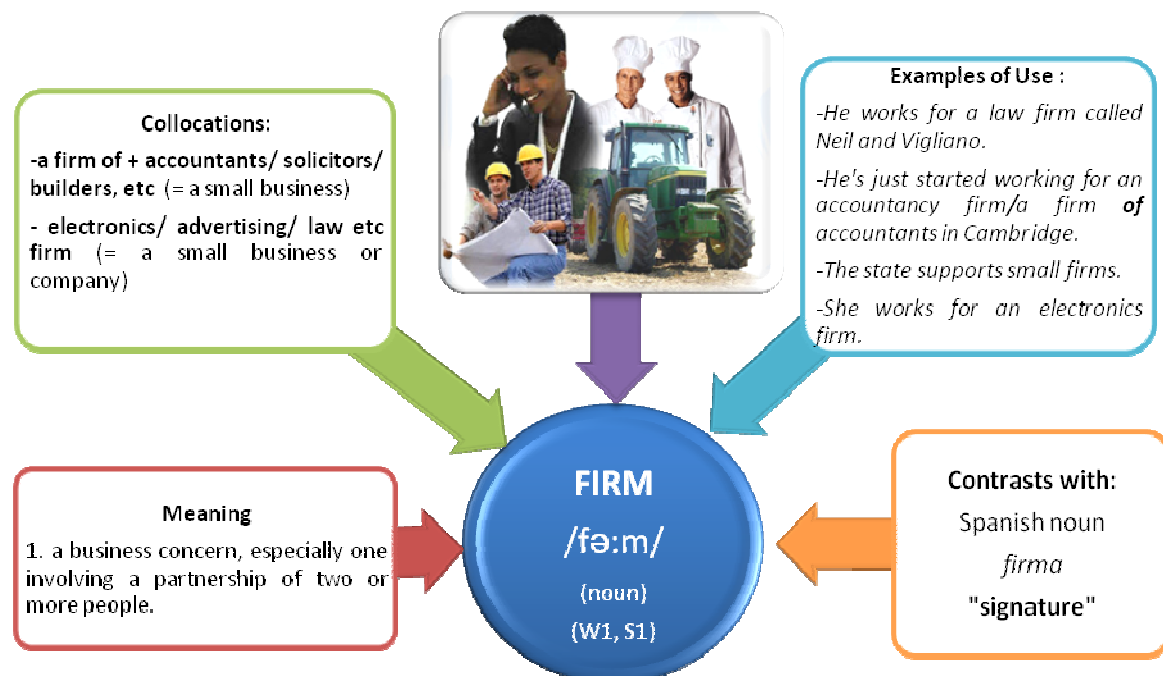
As regards the analysis of this word, a total of 6 out of the 39 examples of *fine* that occur in SULEC are adjectives, the rest being nouns and verbs (*to pay a fine* or *to fine sb*). Both the verbal form and the noun have been disregarded in this analysis because it does not meet the preestablished criterion of frequency. In any case, this adjective does not seem to be problematic for Spanish learners of English. Although there seems to be a mismatch at the level of formality of this word with regard to the context in which it

occurs. The use of this adjective is considered as semantically correct since any English native speaker would understand what the learners mean.

- ✓ (138) Not all the problems related to a University occur after the graduation. Some are produced in the entrance exam. The most known cases occur in the field that requires a lot of talent such as in the Faculty of *Fine Arts*. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0002.3>
- ✓ (139) And... is not television like that? When you sit before your T.V. set and watch at the images in movement it is like entering in to another world where everything is *fine* and mervellous, <ICLE-SP-UCM-0006.3>
- ✓ (140) However, marriages by the state are legal and from my point of view, they are *fine*. (SULEC-WP-IL-Document 1314)
- ✓ (141) The first thing is doing the curriculum vitae. "OK, *fine*", it takes you a long time, but you do it. (SULEC-WP-AL-Document 718)

► **FIRM** (noun): Origin: late 16th century: from Spanish and Italian *firma*, from medieval Latin, from Latin *firmare* 'fix, settle' (in late Latin 'confirm by signature'), from *firmus* 'firm'. The word originally denoted one's autograph or signature; later (mid 18th century) the name under which the business of a firm was transacted, hence the firm itself (late 18th century)

*Firm* and *firma* are totally different in meaning. The English term is defined below:



These nouns can be easily translated by:

(EN) FIRM = (SP) EMPRESA

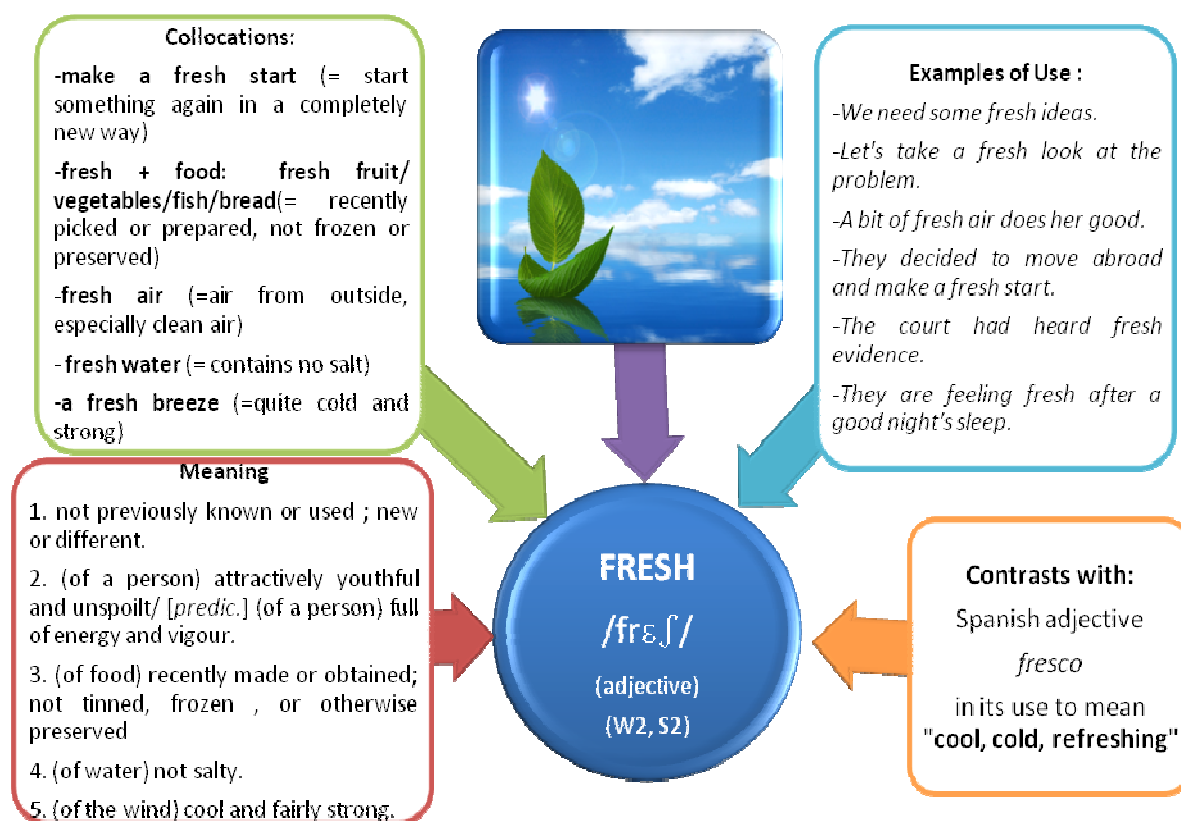
(SP) FIRMA= (EN) SIGNATURE

According to the data retrieved from ICLE and SULEC, the English noun *firm* (“small company”) does not seem to be problematic for Spanish learners of English. They use it when talking about companies, enterprises, so their concept of this word is the right one, as shown by examples such as the following:

- ✓ (142) That is why, instead of investing money for an ecological campaign, a *firm* will do it for a big enterprise that will get a lot of profit from it. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0009.5>
- ✓ (143) the great majority of private institutions which give to their students the opportunity of putting into practice the knowledges they receive by supplying them professional training in different *firms* <ICLE-SP-UCM-0012.1>
- ✓ (144) Some people do practise in a *firm* in a way that the *firm* teaches what they need for working and then they give them a job. (SULEC-WP-AL-DOCUMENT 718)

► **FRESH** (adjective): Origin: Old English *fersc* ‘not salt, fit for drinking’, superseded in Middle English by forms from Old French *freis*, *fresche*; both ultimately of Germanic origin and related to Dutch *vers* and German *frisch*

There are semantic overlaps between the English adjective *fresh* and Spanish *fresco*; however, there are also some differences in use, as can be gathered from the following figure.



The semantic differences of these two adjectives are made evident in the translations provided below:

(EN) FRESH = (SP) RECIÉN HECHO; DULCE; LIMPIO; FRESCO

(SP) FRESCO = (EN) FRESH; UNRIPENED; COOL

What learner language tells us about this lexical item is that although students have some problems in grammar (e.g. *keep fresh their knowledge* should be “keep their knowledge fresh”), they know the meaning of this word, as seen from the students’ writings in both corpora.

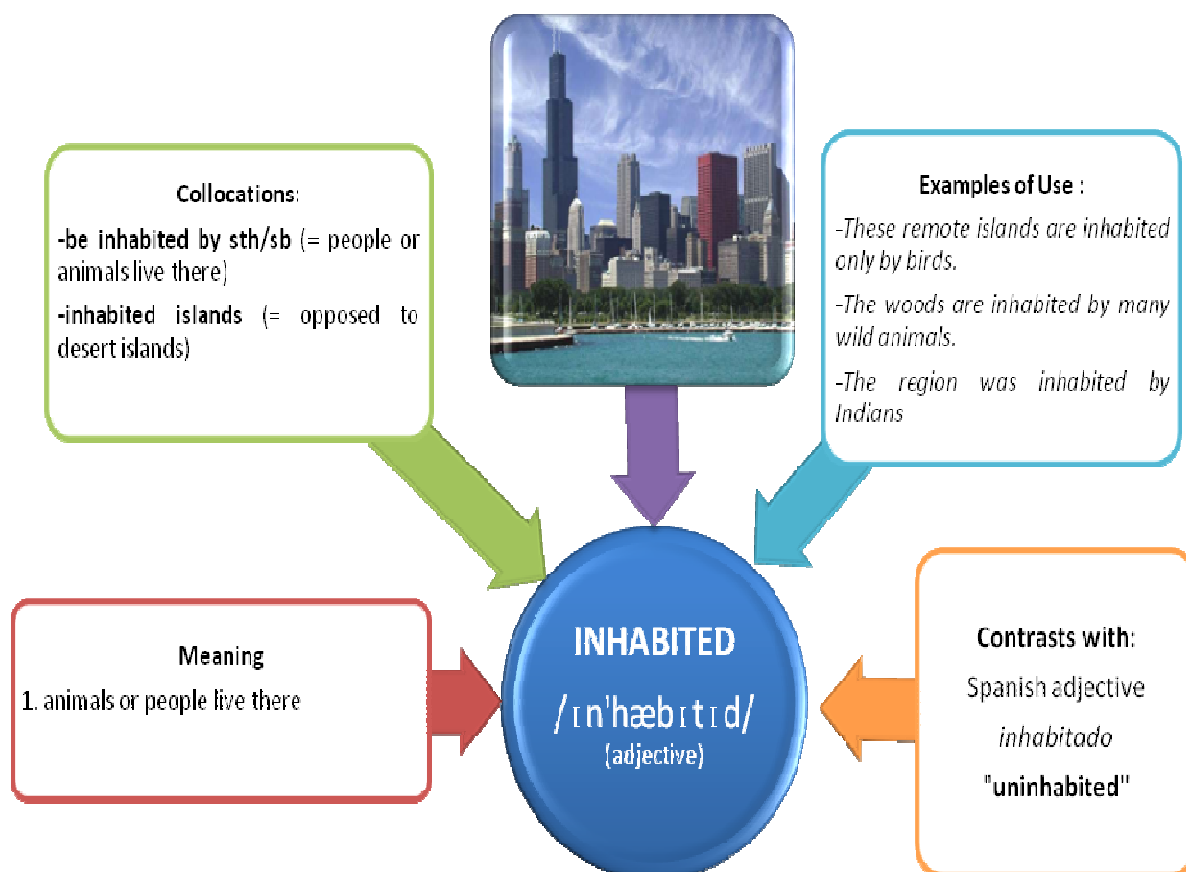
- ✓ (145) we drink Coca-cola only because we think it is how we could be beautiful, fresh and calm <ICLE-SP-UCM-0048.3>
- ✓ (146) Although people have the right to smoke, other people also have the right to breathe fresh and clean air. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT Document 1280)
- ✓ (147) Those who think that an exam like "selectividad" is necessary think that these exams are a very good way to keep fresh their knowledge, and also to remember those things that they had forgotten during the year. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 1056)



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► **INHABITED** (adjective): Dwelt in; having inhabitants. Origin: late Middle English *inhabite*, *enhabite*, from Old French *enhabiter* or Latin *inhabitare*, from *in-* 'in' + *habitare* 'dwell' (from *habere* 'have')

*Inhabited* is a participial adjective with a confusing morphological structure. This word has been included in this analysis and categorised as a special case. The presence of the identifiable prefix *in-*, which commonly carries a negative meaning, is part of the lemma of the word. The figure below illustrates the meaning and use of this lexical item.



*Inhabited* and *inhabitado* are different things, the translations below may solve our doubts.

(EN) INHABITED = (SP) HABITADO

(SP) INHABITADO = (EN) UNINHABITED

There are four examples of this word in the corpora. All of them are in written language. Three of them occur in ICLE and the fourth one in SULEC. In SULEC, the word comes in the form of the verb *inhabit*, which seems to be used as a synonym of “dwell,” and it is, therefore, correct.

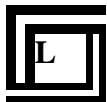
- ✓ **Among all the reasons governments call allege one can guess which is the main one: nationalism’s virility. They can bear the fact lots of gay couples *inhabit* in the countries they are ruling, but they seem unable (or at least ashamed) about its formal recognition. This formal recognition would be to allow them to marry, despite they recognise their right to couple (is this a demonstration of tolerance or just the acceptance of an unavoidable fact?). All in all governments still consider homosexuality as a human disease of the kind of drug-addiction since they all recognise their countries keep drug-addicts even though they do not allow them to take drugs. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 508)**



However the participial form occurs in ICLE, this time the writer seems to be thinking of *uninhabited* when he uses *inhabited*. It appears in a text where the proximity of the phrase “to emigrate to another area” leads us to think that this student is misusing this lexical item.

- × (148) Well, that same road, if one looks carefully, has been built in the middle of a not very high mountain. [...] *inhabited* with different kinds of animals, that have had to emigrate to another area, where is not their own. This is one of the many examples of how man is set on progressing and how he cannot (or does not want) to listen to the SOS call of nature. <ICLE-SP-UCM-001.10>

Data from these two corpora will be complemented with the analysis of how learners interpret and understand this verb in the second part of this dissertation. In the second study, learners must decide which of the two pictures, a) one of a house in ruins that is presumably “uninhabited” and b) another of a well-built and rich house with the lights on, best defines the word *inhabited*. By analysing the learners’ responses, it is possible to get to know the students’ mental concept and interpretation of this word (see chapter 4, sections 4.6.1 and 4.6.2., pp. 346, 387).

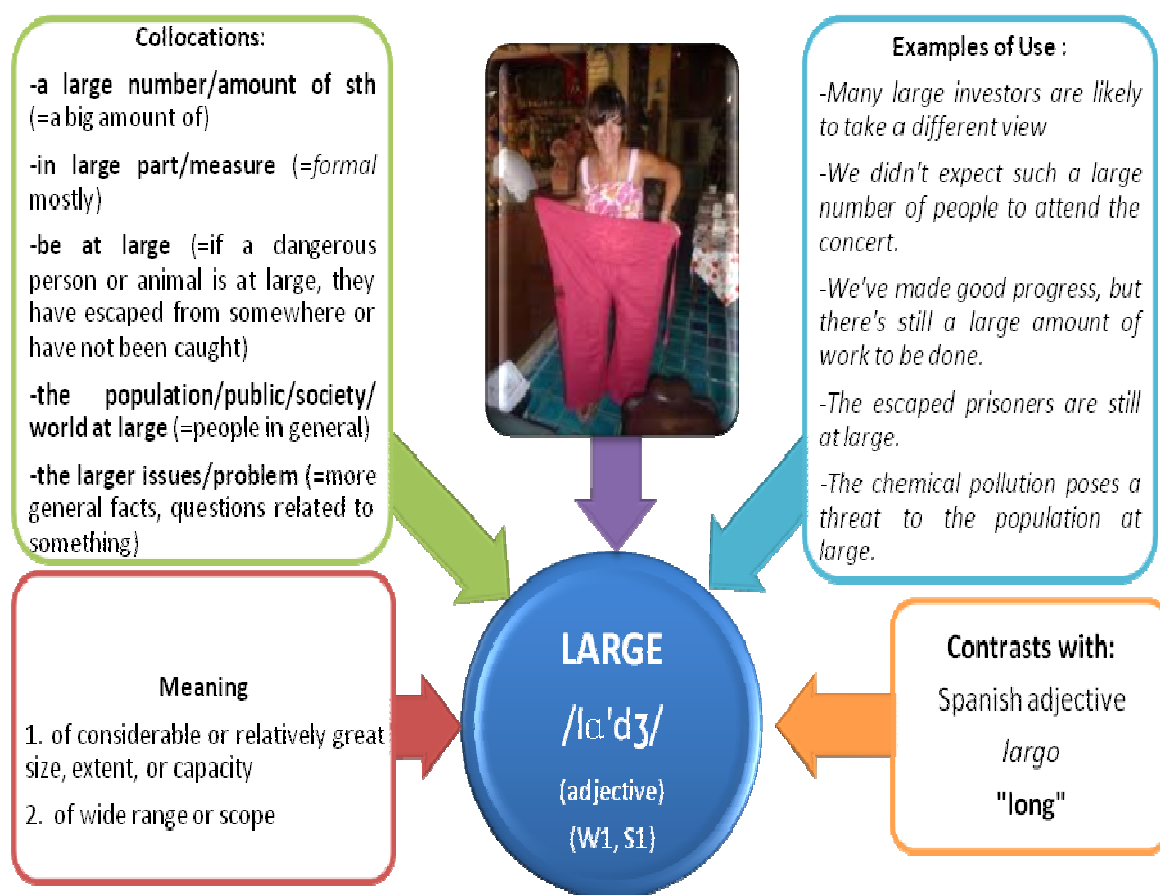


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► **LARGE** (adjective): Ample, wide, great.

Origin: Middle English (in the sense ‘liberal in giving, lavish, ample in quantity’): via Old French from Latin *larga*, feminine of *largus* ‘copious’

**Large** is a false friend with Spanish *largo*. The picture of the girl in the diagram illustrates what **large** means in English in a visual way.



The translations provided here may be clarifying of the main semantic difference between these adjectives:

(EN) LARGE = (SP) GRANDE

(SP) LARGO = (EN) LONG

The adjective *large* seems to be quite challenging for learners, according to data from both corpora. They mistakenly use it with the meaning of “long” instead of “big.” This constitutes a clear case of semantic transfer from Spanish *largo* (“long”).

- ✱ (149) Finally I want to say that study a degree it's a very *large* process (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 1343)
- ✱ (150) I think really degrees are excessive theoretical in universitys and students that finish a licenciature don't have a good preparation to realice the work for they were preparated by universitys. In many licenciatures, especially a *larger*, but also medicine, should have practic lessons (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 677)
- ✱ (151) Nowadays companies seek the most qualified employers and that means that these ought to have the best qualifications and the *larges* experience posible (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 1391)

Some students use this lexical item appropriately in the right collocations to express quantity.

- ✓ (152) Varied opinions are available. On one hand, there is a group of people (probably the *largest* one) who strongly believe that smoking in public places should be illegal (SULEC-WP-AL- DOCUMENT 474)
- ✓ (153) It could be argued, however, that this competition might be seen otherwise, that is, trying to lose the *larger* number of points in the lesser time (SULEC-WP-AL- DOCUMENT 1331)

Examples in ICLE follow the same tendency, many of them use this adjective in contexts where it does not sound natural. Evidence from the *British National Corpus*<sup>51</sup> clearly supports this claim. Thus, collocations such as \*large influence (instead of great influence), \*large fortune (as substitute for a good/considerable fortune), or \*large list (in the place of *long*) are recurrent in learner language. However, these word combinations are rare in English and they are therefore considered inaccurate.

- \* (154) Nowadays televisio has a *large* influence on the viewer`s behaviour and it is a way of escapism as well. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0044.3>
- \* (155) The characters belongs to the well to do sectors. The female ones usually are beautiful and have a *large* fortune <ICLE-SP-UCM-0004.8>
- \* (156) Nowadays,our life is riddled of machines which entail an advanced technology: televisions, cars, cameras and a *large* list <ICLE-SP-UCM-0015.5>

On the other hand, this adjective very often occurs in the fixed expression “a large number of...” In this case, *large* is regarded as correct.

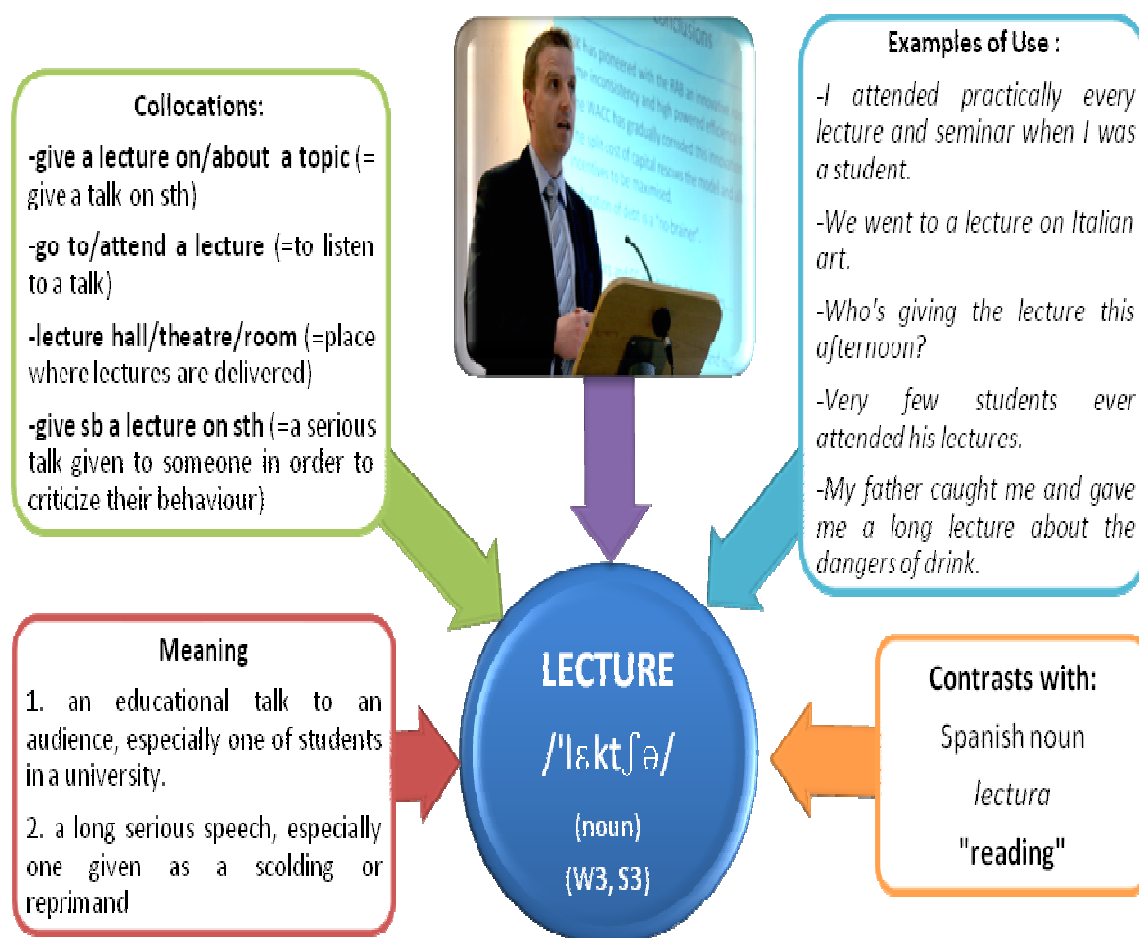
- ✓ (157) The complicacies that Military Service establish to youth are connected, in a *large* number of cases, with the incompatibility of study and do the Military Service. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0013.3>
- ✓ (158) Both wings of the suffrage movement encouraged women to engage in war work. Women responded in *large* numbers and by the end of the war 90% were doing work done by men<ICLE-SP-UCM-0023.4>
- ✓ (159) in *large* cities everyday a lot of people is robbed though in little towns and villages it can happens the same. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0005.3>

► **LECTURE** (noun): Origin: late Middle English (in the sense ‘reading, a text to read’): from Old French, or from medieval Latin *lectura*, from Latin *lect-* ‘read, chosen’, from the verb *legere*

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<sup>51</sup> I accessed the BNC corpus through Mark Davies’ free online interface that can be found at: <<http://corpus.byu.edu/bnc/x.asp?w=943&h=530>>

English *lecture* and Spanish *lectura* do not refer to the same concepts; by the former is meant a formal talk on a topic, while the latter denotes the act of reading (as in “reading a book”).



The simplest translations for these terms are:

(EN) LECTURE= (SP) CLASE, CONFERENCIA, CHARLA

(SP) LECTURA = (EN) READING

In ICLE there are three examples of *lecture*. In one of them, it is correctly used while in the others it is not.

- ✓ (160) **This has affected enormously the quality of the education. Most of the courses are lectures where students spend the time just taking notes.**  
<ICLE-SP-UCM-0008.4>

The author of the next example assigns the meaning of “reading; interpretation” to the word *lecture*. This is a clear sample of semantic transfer where the Spanish word *lectura* could have induced the learner to use the English word in this context.

- × (161) **The Victorian Society Drama. The Society Drama can be situated in the second half of the XIX century. In this epoch the middle-class had the economic and political power. The society drama was a (...) lecture of the world middle-class values and moralities. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0006.8>**

There is another sample sentence containing the word *lecture* in ICLE which has not been considered in the final figures. *Lecture* is here confused with *lecturer*. As the result of an intralingual confusion between two terms of the L2, this example is not computed in this piece of research (it is not a problem of the false friend type):

- × (162) **...That is, in Britain a big different treatment is given for men and women. Statistics show it in a clear way [ ... ] An example to illustrate this idea is that the 98% of the *lectures* at British university are men, so that if they have better jobs they have better pay. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0008.5>**

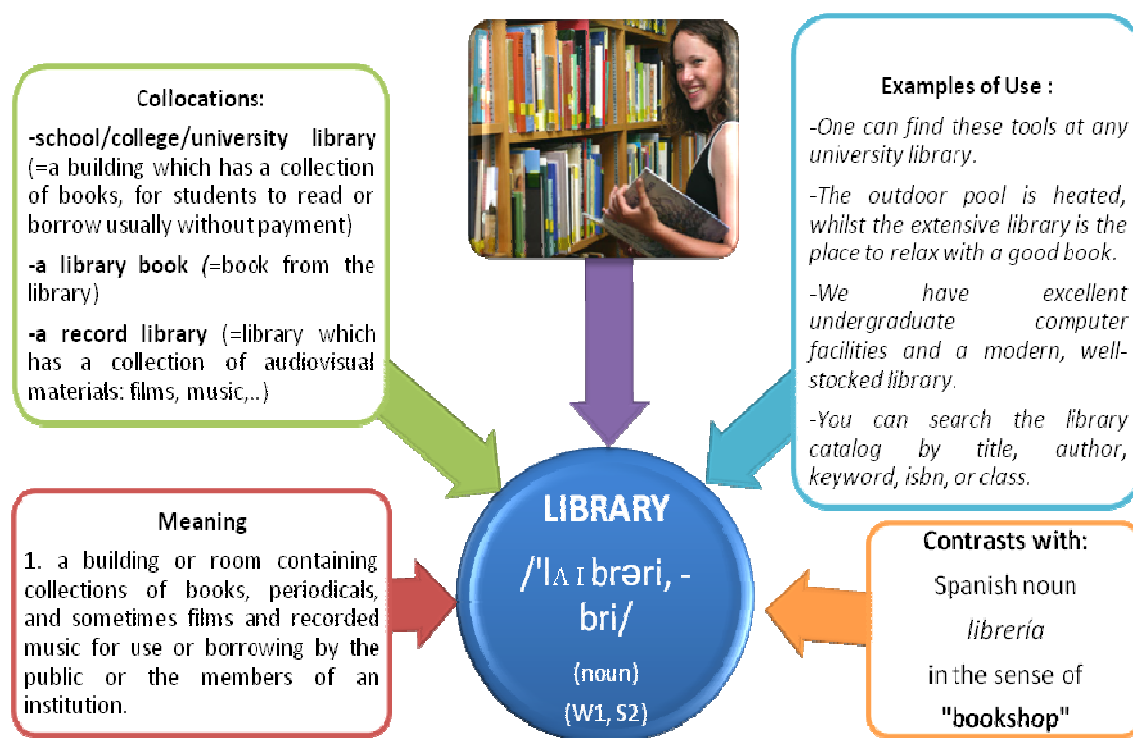
In addition to this, this noun occurs four times in SULEC; and it is misused on three occasions.

- × (163) **...and the teachers look their, but don't take their a *lecture*, they look this horrible situation and don't make nothing. In other hand other people, I por example, can't see this situation and when I see these childs I take a *lecture*, because I hate people that smoke, but childs...this is more horrible! (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 81)**

In example 163, the learner seems to use the word *lecture* to refer to the idea of learning something from a particular situation or drawing a lesson from something. As this student does not know how to express this idea successfully in English, s/he tries her/his best to get out of the problem and comes up with new collocations (*take their a lecture* and *take a lecture*) with ineffective results.

► **LIBRARY** (noun): Origin: late Middle English: via Old French from Latin *libraria* 'bookshop', feminine (used as a noun) of *librarius* 'relating to books', from *liber*, *libr-* 'book'

English *library* and Spanish *librería* are partially deceptive words. Although their primary meanings are different, there are some occasions where they can be interchangeable.



The partial friendship of these terms is shown in the translations provided:

(EN) LIBRARY = (SP) BIBLIOTECA

(SP) LIBRERÍA = (EN) BOOKSHOP; LIBRARY (at home)

This item seems to be the focus of attention of many teachers and students. This would justify the absence of inaccuracies in its use.

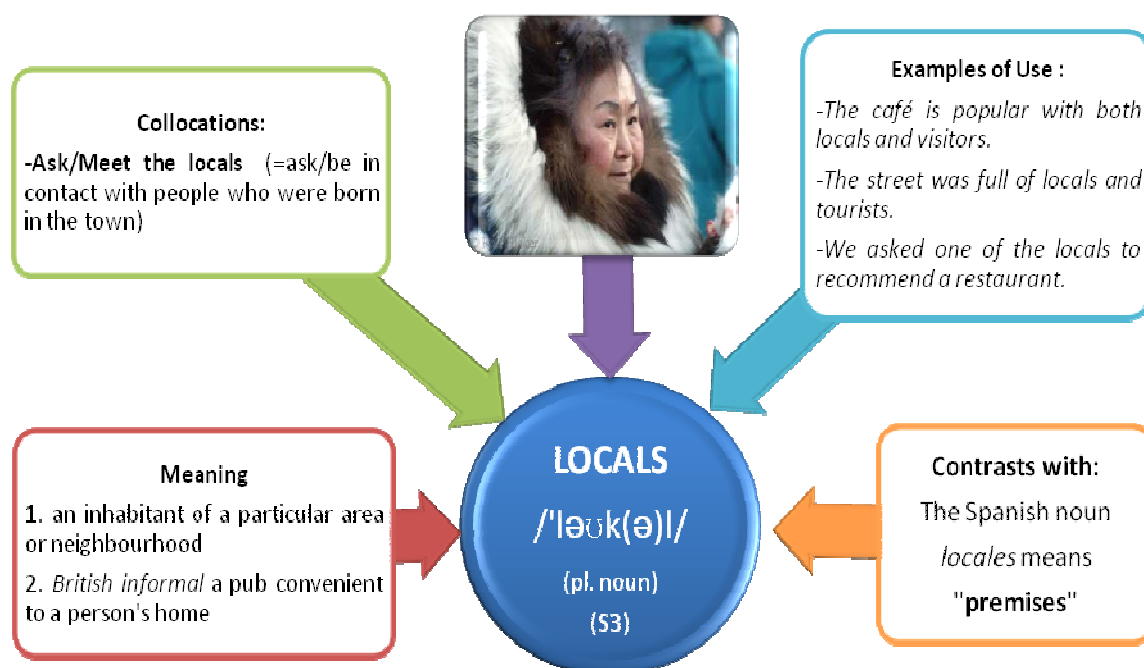
- ✓ (164) Today each prisoner have access to a gym, to a video and television room, to a *library*... <ICLE-SP-UCM-0057.4> (SULEC-WP-IL DOCUMENT 56)
- ✓ (165) I would like to highlight that Spain is one of the countries better prepared to have an important tradition of University by its healthy food, weather, but we need more *libraries*, better classrooms ...,
- ✓ (166) ....when somebody are in *library*, often people smoke and in the libraries canno't smoke. They don't interesting for rules. (SULEC-WP-IL DOCUMENT 909)
- ✓ (167) Another evident reason why students do not finish their studies as skilfull as they are supposed to after five years of training is that they are not provided with the necessary materials. *Libraries* are small in space and scarce in sources. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0008.4>

The lack of errors in the use of *library* might indicate that students are already acquainted with the semantic divergence between this English word and the seemingly corresponding Spanish term *librería*. Although this noun does not pose serious problems in the written production of Spanish learners, we find some difficulties in

spoken discourse. The speed and the spontaneity required in oral texts might not assist learners with false friends.

► **LOCALS** (pl., noun): Origin: late Middle English: from late Latin *localis*, from Latin *locus* 'place'

When the English noun *locals* is used in the plural form, it frequently refers to the inhabitants of a particular area. However, the Spanish similar form *locales* (i.e. plural for *local*) is used to refer to “premises” or even “night clubs.”



The translations of these two nouns are given below:

(EN) LOCALS = (SP) LA GENTE AUTÓCTONA DE LA ZONA

(SP) LOCALES = (EN) BUSINESS PREMISES

Examples of this noun found in SULEC are all incorrect. *Locals* is used by learners when they mean “premises,” as illustrated in the examples below.

- × (168) The restaurants and cafés had to be redistributed. The space of the *locals* had to be separated in two areas; one for the smoking people and the other one for the rest of the customers. A huge amount of money was spent to comply with all these requirements. But this only affected to the *locals* that were bigger than 100m<sup>2</sup>. (SULEC-WP-IL DOCUMENT 1386)
- × (169) Public *locals* should be aconditionated to these people and should be special departmens like in the train (SULEC-WP-IL DOCUMENT 306)

- \* (170) This provokes a high number of reforms on many *locals* and the subsequent loss of money from the owner of the cafe/bar. This law also forbide to sold tobacco on non-special *locals*, such as bars, cafés , cinemas among others (SULEC-WP-IL DOCUMENT 1233)

Students are using this noun with a different meaning; this might possibly cause misunderstandings with native speakers.

► **LUXURY** (noun): Origin: Middle English (denoting lechery): from Old French *luxurie*, *luxure*, from Latin *luxuria*, from *luxus* 'excess'.

The English noun *luxury* does not mean *lust* as the Spanish noun *lujuria*.



It may result embarrassing for any English person to translate *luxury* into Spanish *lujuria*.

(EN) LUXURY = (SP) LUJO

(SP) LUJURIA = (EN) LUST, LECHERY

The misuse of *luxury* might bring about communication misunderstandings between native and non-native speakers of English. However, data provided by learner corpora show that Spanish learners use this word correctly. There are two cases where the noun



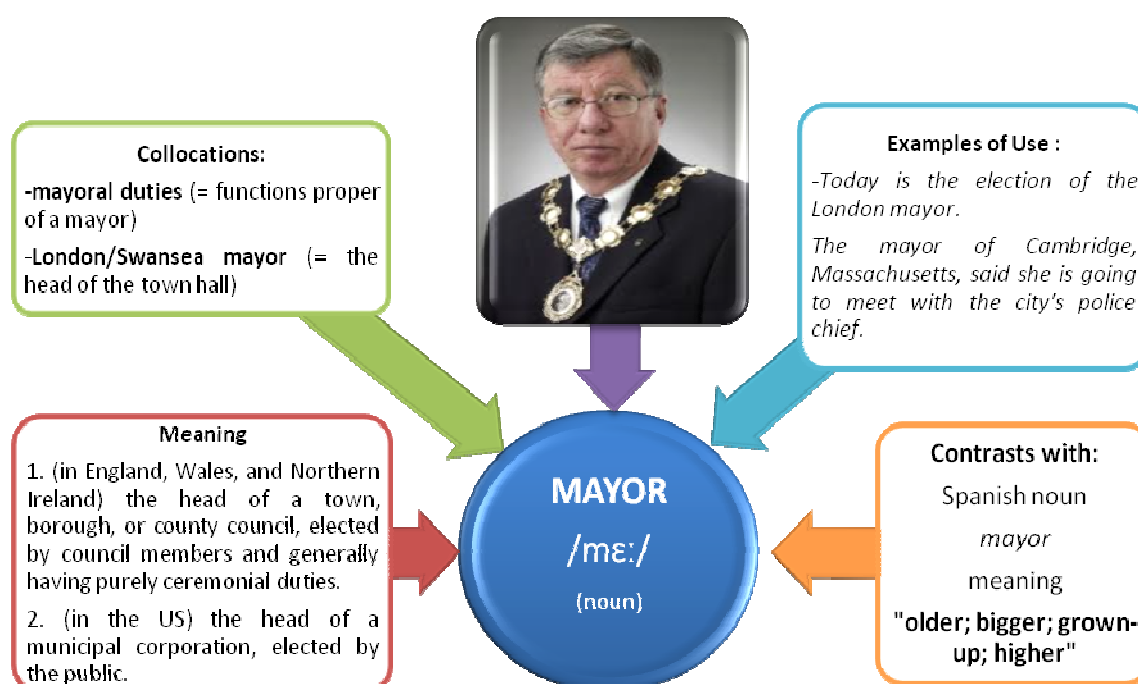
*luxury* is used instead of the adjective *luxurious*. These examples are disregarded in the final count.

- ✓ (171) there are a lot of problems which come from the bad use or the waste of the money. This happened when we crossed the border between the necessity and the *luxury*, the excessive *luxury*. (SULEC-WP-IL DOCUMENT 412)
- ✓ (172) During the Spanish dictatorial epoque, the study of a career was a *luxury* which a few families could afford. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0001.3>
- ✓ (173) This mirage of abundance and *luxury* blinds men and makes them believe that is what happiness consists in, which is a terrible mistake <ICLE-SP-UCM-0042.3>
- × (174) Other countries like England and France have increased the prices of tobacco taxes, and smoking there has become a *luxury* vice (SULEC-WP-IL DOCUMENT 1485)
- × (175) "dark business". This phenomenon is relevant nowadays, as we can see in countries as Spain, Italy, EE.UU. or Great Britain, where politics, don't agree of what they want, prefer to put in dangerous his liberty in order to buy a *luxury* apartment with two hundred bathrooms. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0048.4>



► **MAYOR** (noun): Origin: Middle English: from Old French *maire*, from the Latin adjective *major* 'greater', used as a noun in late Latin

A **mayor** is the person who leads the government of a town or city in Britain, which is different from Spanish *mayor*.



A translation of these two words facilitates the understanding of the main semantic differences:

(EN) MAYOR = (SP) ALCALDE

(SP) MAYOR = (EN) THE HIGHEST, THE BIGGEST, THE OLDEST

The word *mayor* occurs three times in SULEC, while no instances of it are registered in ICLE. One of the examples in SULEC shows the use of *mayor* as an adjective. This is due to intralingual confusion with *major*.

- ✱ (176) **I think that the type of education should change. The *mayor* problem is that most people don't want it to change (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 297).**

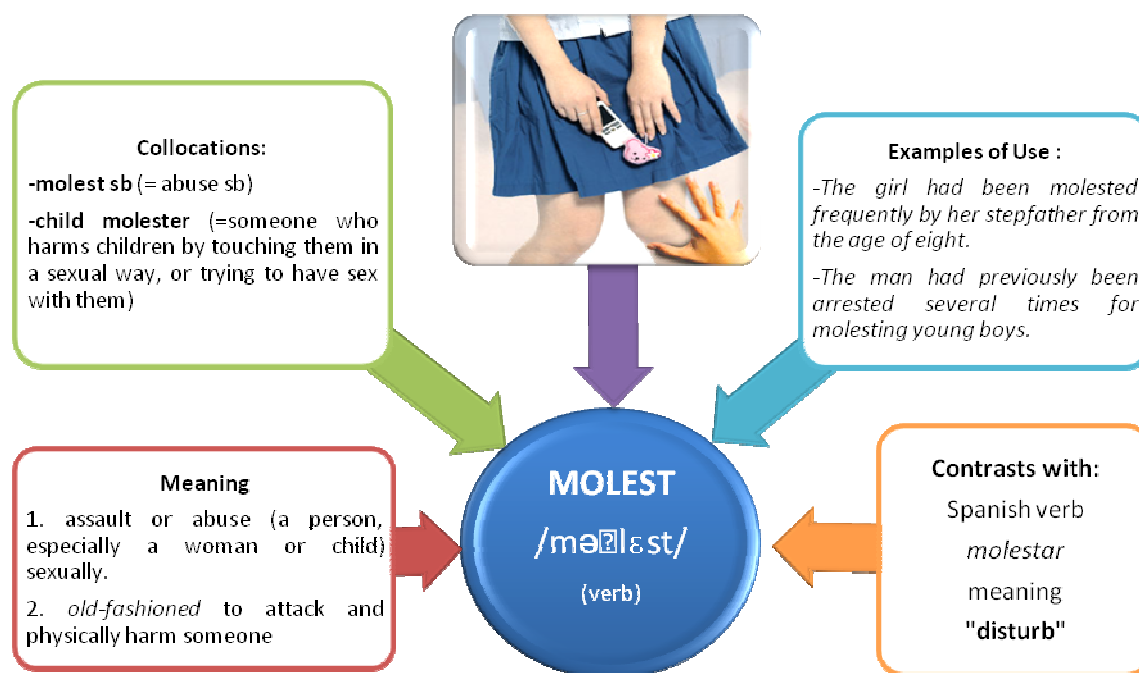
However, when used as a noun, the actual sense of the English word is shown.

- ✓ (177) **One striking example of this is the case of New York city, where its *mayor* enforced a complete ban on smoking in public places, this means that anybody could be arrested or fined for smoking a cigarette. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 1352)**

The analysis of this item indicates the need of talking about the semantic and syntactic differences between the English words *mayor* and *major* in an EFL context so that we can avoid problems such as the ones shown in 176.

► **MOLEST** (verb): Origin:late Middle English (in the sense 'cause trouble to, vex'): from Old French *molester* or Latin *molestare* 'annoy', from *molestus* 'troublesome'

English *molest* differs from the Spanish term *molestar* quite considerably in meaning, as can be easily deduced from the picture below.



The Spanish word does not have any connotations of sexual abuse. The Spanish idea of “molestar” rarely involves violence and can be easily translated into English as *bother*. Conversely, English *molest* means “attack someone with the intention of assaulting this person sexually,” it implies the idea of “sexual harassment.” The most suitable translations for these terms are the following:

(EN) MOLEST = (SP) ACOSAR, AGREDIR SEXUALMENTE

(SP) MOLESTAR = (EN) TO ANNOY

Spanish learners might be seriously misunderstood when they resort to *molest* to express the Spanish idea of *molestar* “bother or disturb.” Thus the use of *molest* in the examples below would produce serious misinterpretations. Any English person would understand that the speakers are considering smokers as rapists in examples from 178 to 180.

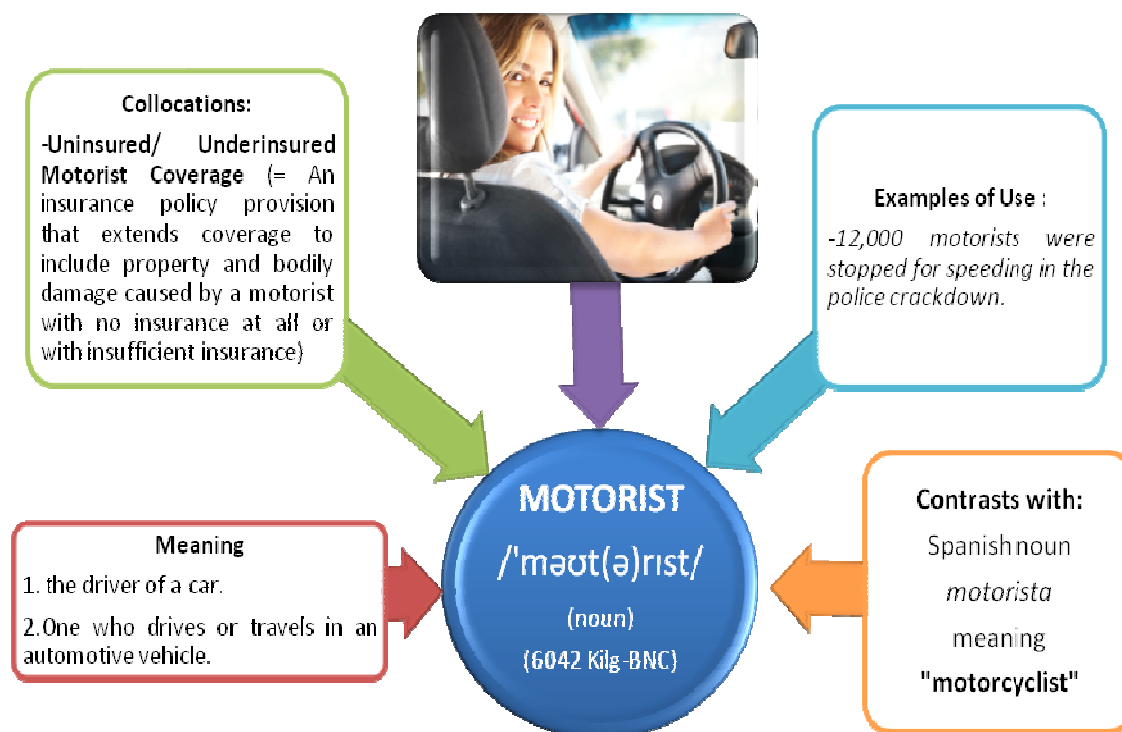
- × (178) If anyone is smoking in a public place he should try don't *molest* arround him. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 906)
- × (179) For example would be a good idea separated in others places persons who smoke for that way they don't *molest* persons who don't like smoke. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 913)
- × (180) I think, that smoking in public places should be illegal because the persons that smoke in this places *molest* to the rest of the persons. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 1149)

These texts have been produced by intermediate students and we might assert that these problems have their origin in language transfer since these learners have the Spanish verb *molestar* in mind.

I would not like to end this section without drawing a parallelism between English *molest*-Spanish *molestar* and English *violate*-Spanish *violar*. The semantic differences between *violate*- *violar* are similar to those between *molest* and *molestar*. This time the Spanish term *violar* denotes a more serious kind of offence and has the implication of “rape” (as in *Golpeó a su hija y después la violó*) whereas English *violate* refers to the act of “breaking any official agreement or law” (as in *His company violates important environmental laws*).

► **MOTORIST** (noun): Origin: motor+ ist suffix. Motor: late Middle English (denoting a person who imparts motion): from Latin, literally 'mover', based on *movere* 'to move'. The current sense of the noun dates from the mid 19th century.

The English noun *motorist* is almost-identical in form to the Spanish noun *motorista*. However, these two words are FF.



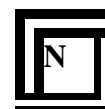
The English item refers to any driver who drives a private car (the Spanish translation would be “conductor”); by contrast, the Spanish item *motorista* has a more restrictive

meaning and is used to refer to a motorcyclist, that is, any person who rides a motorcycle. The translations provided here may help students distinguish these nouns:

(EN) MOTORIST = (SP) CONDUCTOR, AUTOMOVILISTA

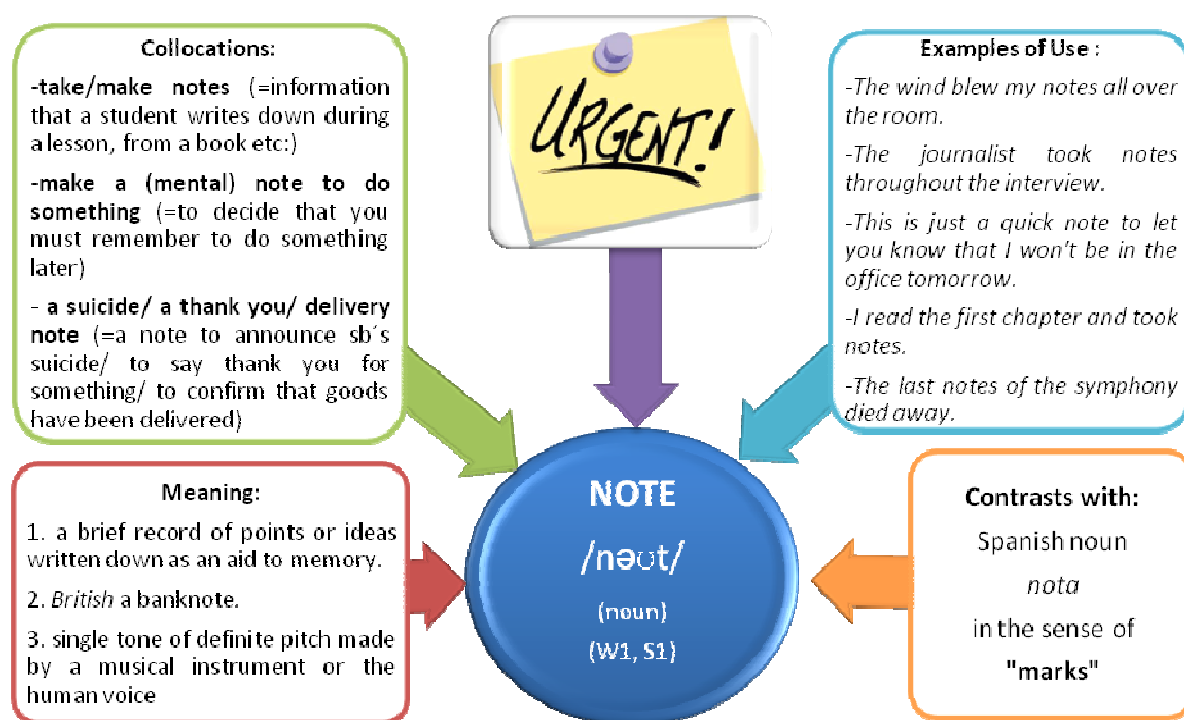
(SP) MOTORISTA = (EN) MOTORCYCLIST

As there are no instances recorded of this item, we cannot reach conclusions on the use of this word by Spanish learners of English. In order to compensate for the lack of data on this noun, the second part of this study will look into the learners' interpretation of *motorist*; students will be asked to translate a police notice that says "motorists, don't leave valuables in your car" (see chapter 4, sections 4.6.1 and 4.6.2., pp. 368, 386).



► **NOTES** (pl. noun): Origin: Middle English: from Old French *note* (noun), *noter* (verb), from Latin *nota* 'a mark', *notare* 'to mark'

English *notes* and Spanish *notas* are partial false friends. The lack of total semantic correspondence of these two words may be misleading for students.



A good way of translating these nouns would be:

(EN) NOTES = (SP) APUNTES; NOTAS

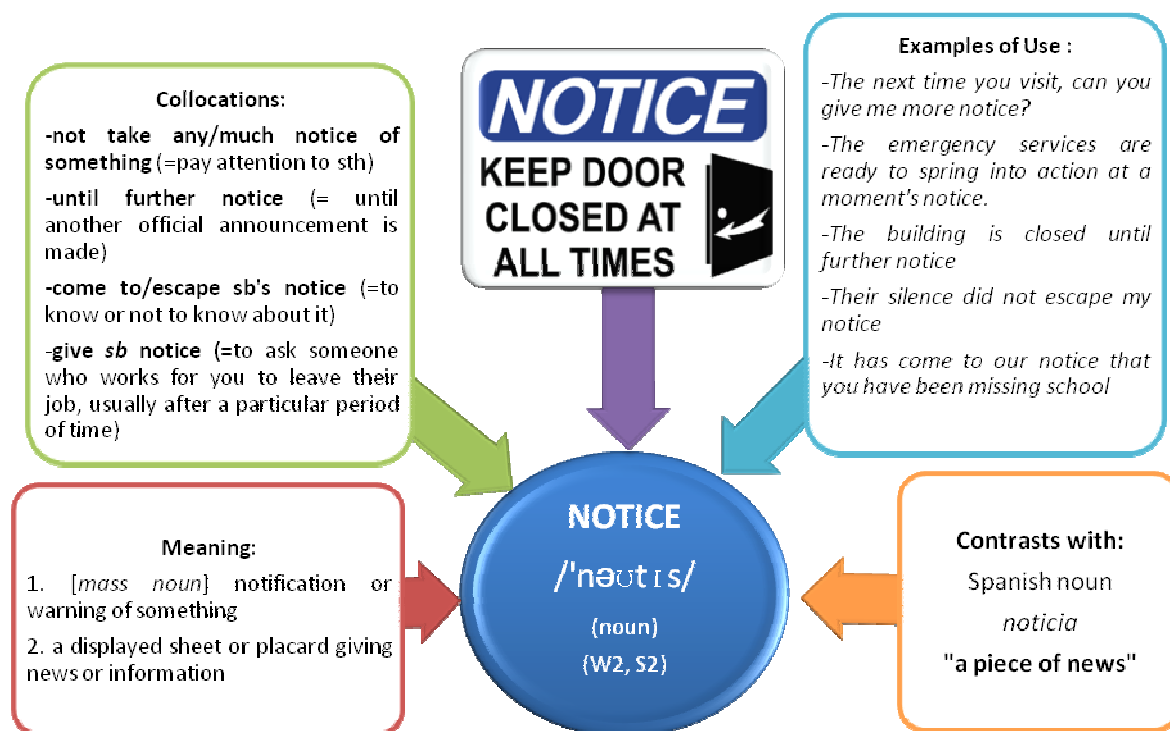
(SP) NOTAS = (EN) MARKS; NOTES

Concerning the data found in the corpora, Spanish learners resort to the English noun *note* and its corresponding plural form *notes* to make reference to the “course marks.” This is repeatedly seen in the learner language analysed; consequently, it is something that language teachers should point out in their classes since this is a recurrent error and students are likely to resort to this word frequently. The examples below show the students’ misuse of the noun *notes*.

- × (181) Only with our *notes* or califications of the high school teacher, we have enough to go to university. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 103)
- × (182) I think that the college *note* must be the most important. People are very nervous in this exam because it’s very important for their future, with the exam’s *note* they can to catch one or other carrier for to have a work years later. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 147)
- × (183) you just choose and if the grade you got in an exam called 'selectividade' in Galician added to the total grade you've gotten in the 'bachillerato' and then you divide it that's all, you've a *note* which indicates more or less your level and if it is superior to that the degree presents, you'll get your place. (SULEC-WP-AL-DOCUMENT 1292)

► **NOTICE** (noun): Origin: late Middle English: from Old French, from Latin *notitia* 'being known.'

*Notice* and *noticia* are two similar nouns which denote different entities. There are some clues on the differences between these words in the following figure.



In any case, a translation of the terms can be useful for a clearer understanding of the semantic differences of these words:

(EN) NOTICE = (SP) AVISO; ANUNCIO

(SP) NOTICIA = (EN) NEWS

As regards the English noun *notice*, it occurs 14 times. Twelve out of the 14 instances are semantically inaccurate owing to the influence of the Spanish term *noticia* “news.” The English meaning of *notice* refers to a “warning,” but learners seem to ignore it. In fact, SSEFL (Spanish Students of English) use this noun as the translation equivalent of Spanish *noticia* (any information on a current event). In the case of this particular word, language transfer is conspicuously seen and does not only affect the semantic nature of words but also their collocational properties. The term *notice* occurs together with the verb *anuncied* (184) which constitutes a clear case of interference of the Spanish phrase *anunciar la noticia* or it is used in combination with the verb “spread” to form the verb phrase “spread notices” (185), which clearly stands for “spread news.”

- × (184) Last November was *anuncied* the *notice* that Felipe and Letizia Ortiz will married next year. The *notice* at first impacted in the people who can’t imagine this event.. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 44)

- × (185) Television spread *notices* which increased the hate between the ethnic groups. [ ... ] All words, tones, images which appear in television are controlled by someone. We as spectators have the right of having objectives *notices* but it is practically impossible to obtain because power and money are two reason too many important. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0005.5>
- × (186) every people speak of this topic because it is a new *notice* and break the rutine. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 105)
- × (187) I am very effect with this *notice*, because I like all about the nature. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 164)

These data provide us with clear evidence of the influence of the mother tongue on the students' use of the foreign language. Thus, in a way, the first language prompts students to ascribe an incorrect meaning to some English terms, and to use the English item in contexts in which this word would never occur.

There are only two instances which display a “correct” use of this word found in the collocation *to take notice of something*.

- ✓ (188) Sometimes we get involved in artful mechanisms of political censure, without even taking *notice* of it. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0025.3>
- ✓ (189) I think that that the factories have to do the cars with more security, but that is not enough when we don't take *notice* at<sup>52</sup> the advertence of the traffic, of the weather...(SULEC-WP-L-DOCUMENT 1364)

Although this collocation exists in English, its use in 188 sounds weird, any single verb form, such as *realize* or *notice* would be more suitable and would sound more natural in English.

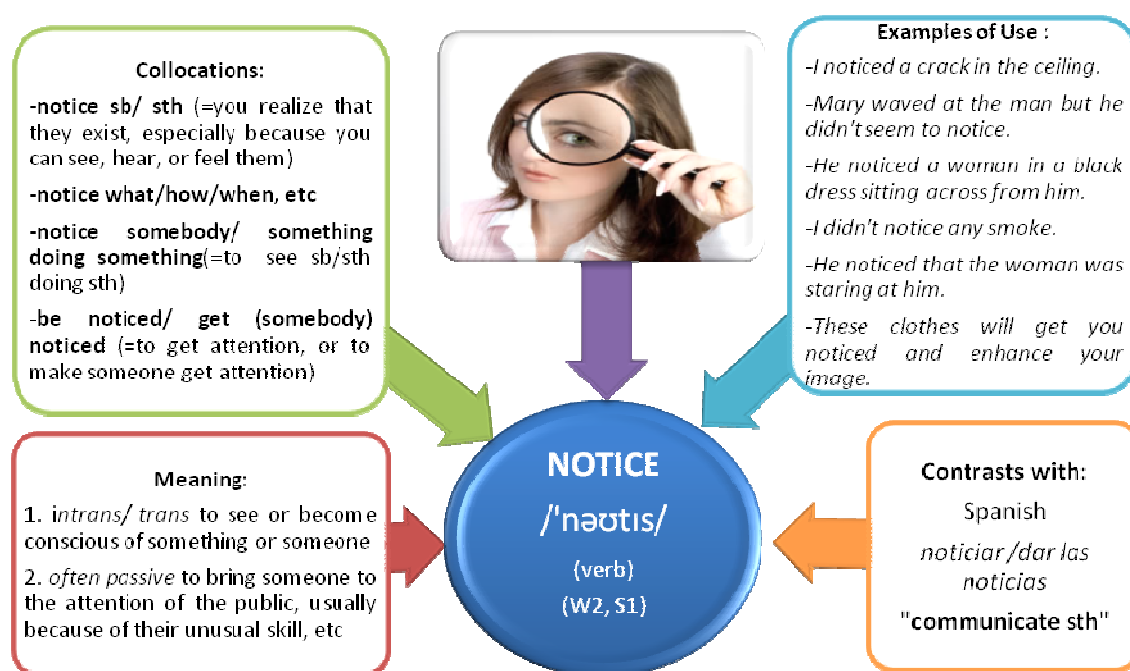
► **NOTICE** (verb): Origin: late Middle English: from Old French, from Latin *notitia* 'being known' (same origin as the noun because it is a case of conversion from noun to verb).

The verb *notice* can be likened to the Spanish verb *noticiar* (as included in the RAE). While the former means “to realise,” the latter denotes the idea of “spreading news.”

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<sup>52</sup>Grammatical and lexical errors in the sample sentences included in this dissertation have been transcribed without changes. Mistakes of this type should be attributed to the authors of the texts represented in the corpora.





A translation of these verbs is interesting and helpful to grasp the meaning differences of these words:

(EN) NOTICE = (SP) DARSE CUENTA

(SP) NOTICIAR = (EN) GIVE THE NEWS

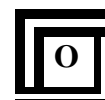
Contrary to what happened with the noun *notice* (previously analysed), there are few cases in which the verb *notice* is misused. In fact, when we analyse the verb *notice*, we cannot generally perceive any type of linguistic interference as shown by the examples below.

- ✓ (190) I think that the degrees or most of them should be checked over again because it can be a motive for giving up studies or when you finish you *notice* that all what you have studied does not help you for what is waiting for you in the real life. (SULEC-WL-IL-DOCUMENT 133)
- ✓ (191) If you *notice* we finish xxx high school with just one xxx question on our mind: xxx what now? Most of us go to University, we study there for around five years and then, ready to work, the rest of it is up to us. (SULEC-WL-IL-DOCUMENT 316)
- ✓ (192) Have you *noticed* how soon we start to talk about money? (SULEC-WL-AL-DOCUMENT 1321)
- ✓ (193) When I look at servicemen I *notice* a shadow of sadness in their faces <ICLE-SP-UCM-0006.2>

The verb *notice* is generally used in the correct way but surprisingly there is one example which shows the wrong use of this verb. The learner uses it to express the idea “giving news on a new tax.”

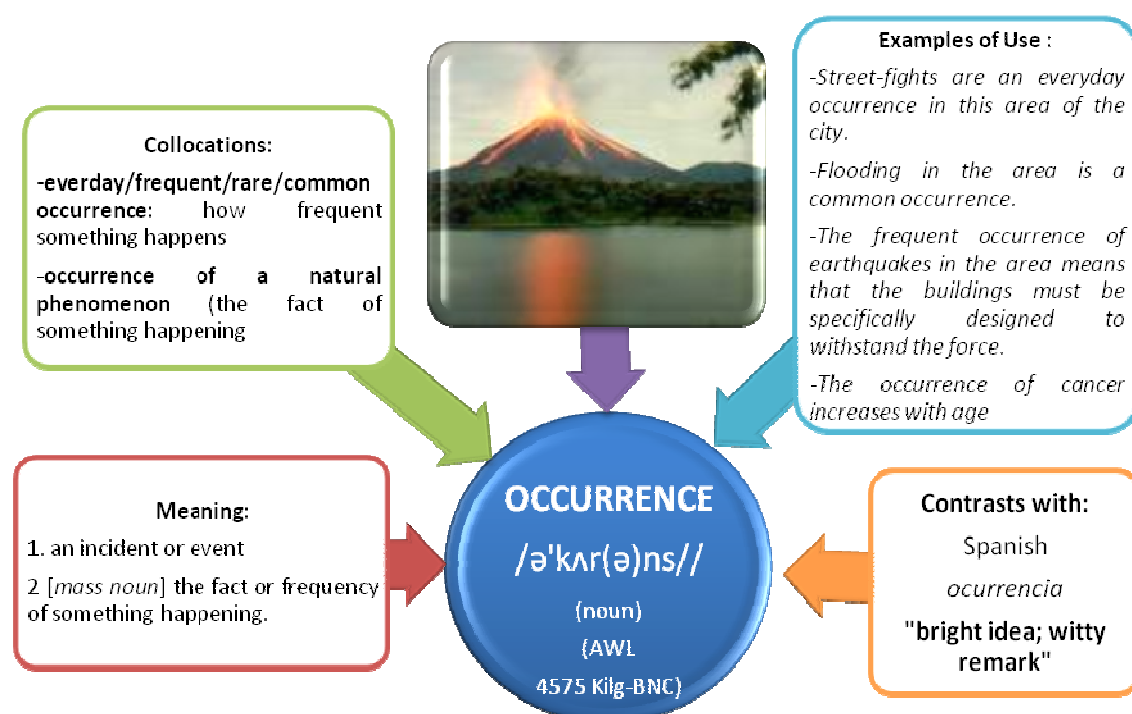
- × (194) The best path of the event is when T.V. *notice* us a new tax is appearing. You have to go down your dear dog because you are badly off.  
<ICLE-SP-UCM-0020.3>

The process involved in this error may be the following: Spanish learners think about “dar la noticia” and thus they express this idea by means of English *notice*; they then convert this noun into a verb through a process of zero derivation in close analogy with many other English words (e.g. “address” or “turn” can be a noun or a verb). This results in a wrong use of this English verb.



► **OCCURRENCE** (noun): Origin: mid 16th century: probably from the plural of archaic *occurent*, in the same sense, via French from Latin *occurent-* 'befalling', from the verb *occurrere*

English *occurrence* and Spanish *ocurrencia* are partially deceptive false friends, as can be inferred from the next figure.



The main semantic differences are expressed here by means of their corresponding translations:

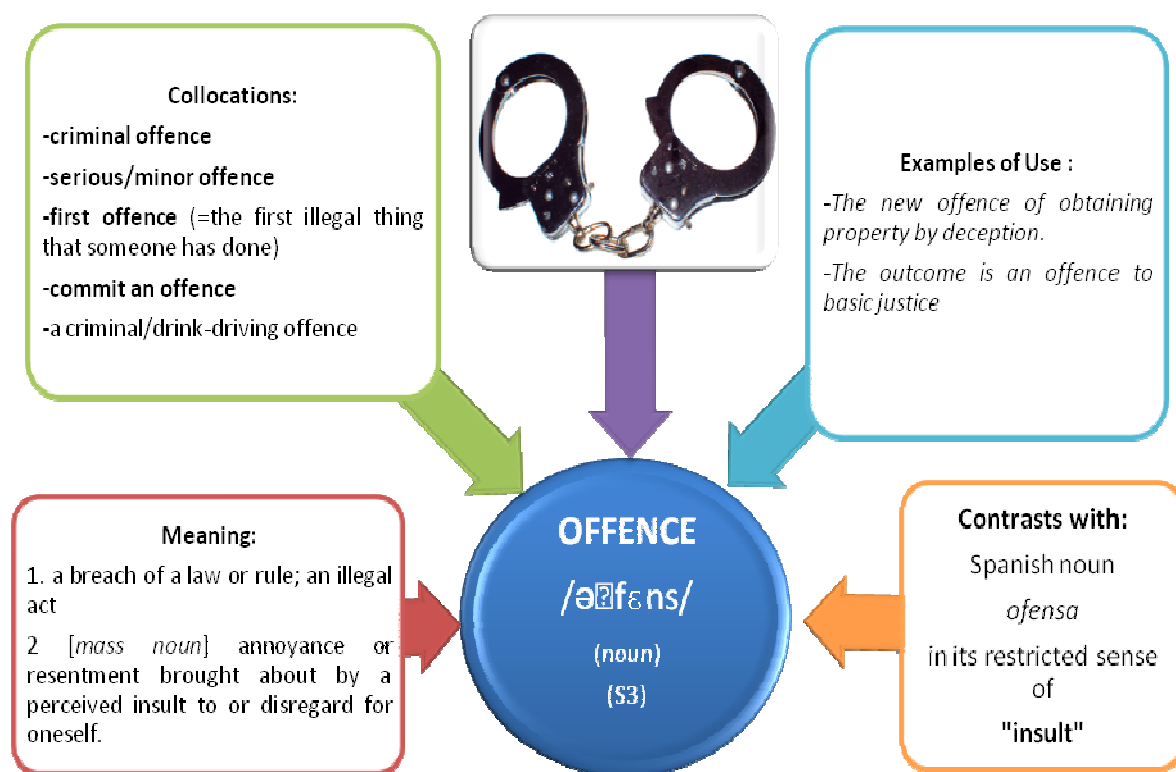
(EN) OCCURRENCE= (SP) INCIDENCIA; SUCESO

(SP) OCURRENCIA= (EN) WITTY REMARK

No instances of this noun have been recorded either in the learners' written productions or in the spoken data. Thus, we are unable to state the problems students may have with this word.

► **OFFENCE** (noun): Origin: late Middle English: from Old French *offens* 'misdeed', from Latin *offensus* 'annoyance', reinforced by French *offense*, from Latin *offensa* 'a striking against, a hurt, or displeasure'; based on Latin *offendere* 'strike against'

*Offence* and *ofensa* are partial false friends, as can be observed in the following figure.



The translation below highlights the main semantic divergence between these similar terms in the two languages.

(EN) OFFENCE= (SP) DELITO; OFENSA; INJURIA

(SP) OFENSA= (EN) INSULT; OFFENCE

There are two occurrences of this noun in SULEC and both of them are spelled in the American way (that is to say *offence* is written with an –s- instead of a –c). If we pay attention to the semantic analysis of both occurrences, one of them is correct and the other is not.

In the first case, the word *offence* occurs in the perfectly acceptable phrase “to commit an offence,” which has the meaning of “minor crime.” This phrase is perfectly understandable and frequently used in English; so there is no doubt that its use in 195 is correct.

- ✓ (195) **this question is not a danger to other person. It is simple for me: when you commit an *offense* you have to pay for the damage that you cause, but if you don't have any kind of damage to other person you don't have to pay for anything. (SULEC-WL-IL-DOCUMENT 650)**

By contrast, although the learner uses a perfectly acceptable collocation “to cause offence” in example 196, the actual context of use reminds us of the Spanish use of *ofensa*. The use of the plural form here is also a clear evidence of the influence of the learners’ mother tongue (the English form would be “to cause offence to sb” in the singular). An English speaker could understand this sentence in a different way. The learner is trying to say that homosexual marriages are not meant to offend or to insult anybody. However, a native speaker of English would probably think that the author is establishing a link between this type of marriage and minor crimes although the real intention of the writer is to make it clear that nobody should feel offended with these marriages. The use of this noun in the plural and the possible confusion that might arise from the use of this word in this sentence led me to include this use in the column of inaccurate uses.

- ✗ (196) **The children have to live with any of their parents, for that reason the best thing is made legal the new situation of their parents, everyone have to do whatever wants, the new marriages don't cause *offenses*, the problem is some people which are living in the past with old ideas and they don't want to renew the laws, (SULEC-WL-IL-DOCUMENT 607)**

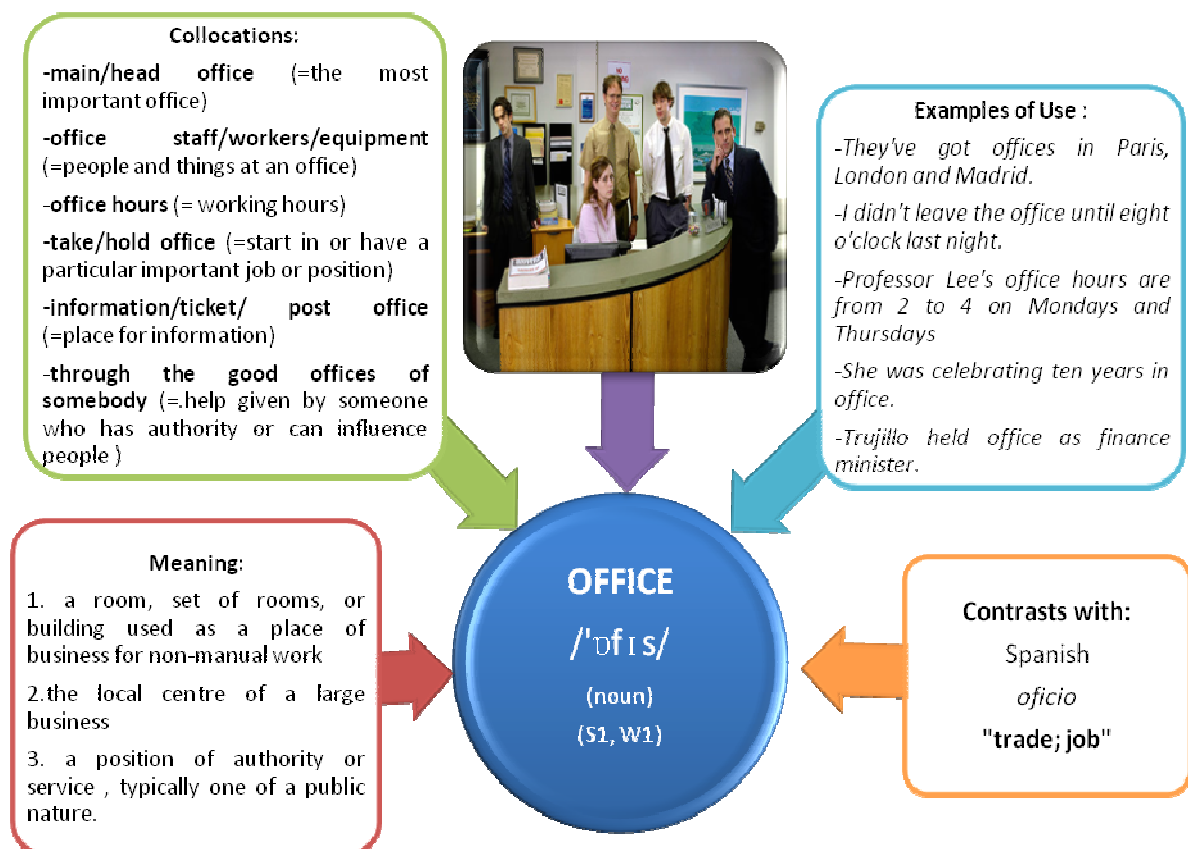
Examples in ICLE are all correct. In addition to this, typical English phrases such as “commit an offence” or “major offence” are present. The British spelling of the word is the most usual one in ICLE. There is only one text that shows the American spelling of this noun (see example 200).

- ✓ (197) **Other sector consider prison as a warning, a way of preventing people from committing *offences* <ICLE-SP-UCM-0009.1>**

- ✓ (198) In my opinion, a person who is in prison owing to a major *offence*, should be in prison the years he deserves. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0011.7>
- ✓ (199) Unfortunately, this kind of people are quite unlike to be successfully rehabilitated. It is quite hbitaul to hear about people who, after having been in jail, have come out and repeated the same *offence* again. <ICLE-SP-UCM-014.10>
- ✓ (200) Catholic Church sees her as a Protestant heretic girl who avoids the hierarchy of Church and goes directly to God. (What an *offense*!).

► **OFFICE** (noun): Origin: Middle English: via Old French from Latin *officium* 'performance of a task' (in medieval Latin also 'office, divine service'), based on *opus* 'work' + *facere* 'do.'

*Office* and *oficio* are related nouns which refer to different things. While *office* denotes a space for working, *oficio* is the actual job you are performing. Despite this relationship, they can be considered total false friends because they refer to two very different things in real life.



These two nouns can be translated as follows:

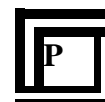
(EN) OFFICE = (SP) OFICINA, ORGANISMO, CARGO.

(SP) OFICIO = (EN) JOB, OFFICIAL NOTE

The word *office* does not pose any problems to Spanish learners. In fact, this noun is perfectly used and seems to have been perfectly acquired. There are even compound nouns in both corpora, such as “registry office (203), ” “the head of the home office (204),” “state office (205),” or the phrases “put somebody in office and remove someone from office (206)” which are totally accurate in English.

- ✓ (201) Places where smoking should be forbidden are civil servants *offices*, schools, hospitals... (SULEC-WL-IL-DOCUMENT 130)
- ✓ (202) In restaurants, *offices*, and other indoors places it must be not allowed because people don't have to be forced to breathe the smoke of people who are smoking. (SULEC-WL-IL-DOCUMENT 324)
- ✓ (203) There are many problems in this society with relation to this thème: - Firstly, gay couples can not get married in church but they can get married a registry *office*. (SULEC-WL-IL-DOCUMENT 1049)
- ✓ (204) It is very illustrating what Fraga - President of Galicia - once said when he was the head of *Home office* right before Franco died. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0009.4>
- ✓ (205) There are some methods to try give up, such us some books, nicotine chewing-gums, vitaminics diets, help psicologist help... Each more time tabacco increases its prize, “Tabacalera” ( bussines of tabacco in Spain) is not totally of the State, places where xx it cannot smoke are more, the State is prohibiting smoking in xxx for trips by train, in the busses, in xx State's *offices*... (SULEC-WL-AL-DOCUMENT 853)
- ✓ (206) I remember being there when the U.S. Forces invaded Panama to overthrow General Noriega - who, by the way, had been put in *office* by the U.S. Government - most people had been brainwashed and agreed on that Noriega was a dictator who should be removed from *office* by any means <ICLE-SP-UCM-0009.4>

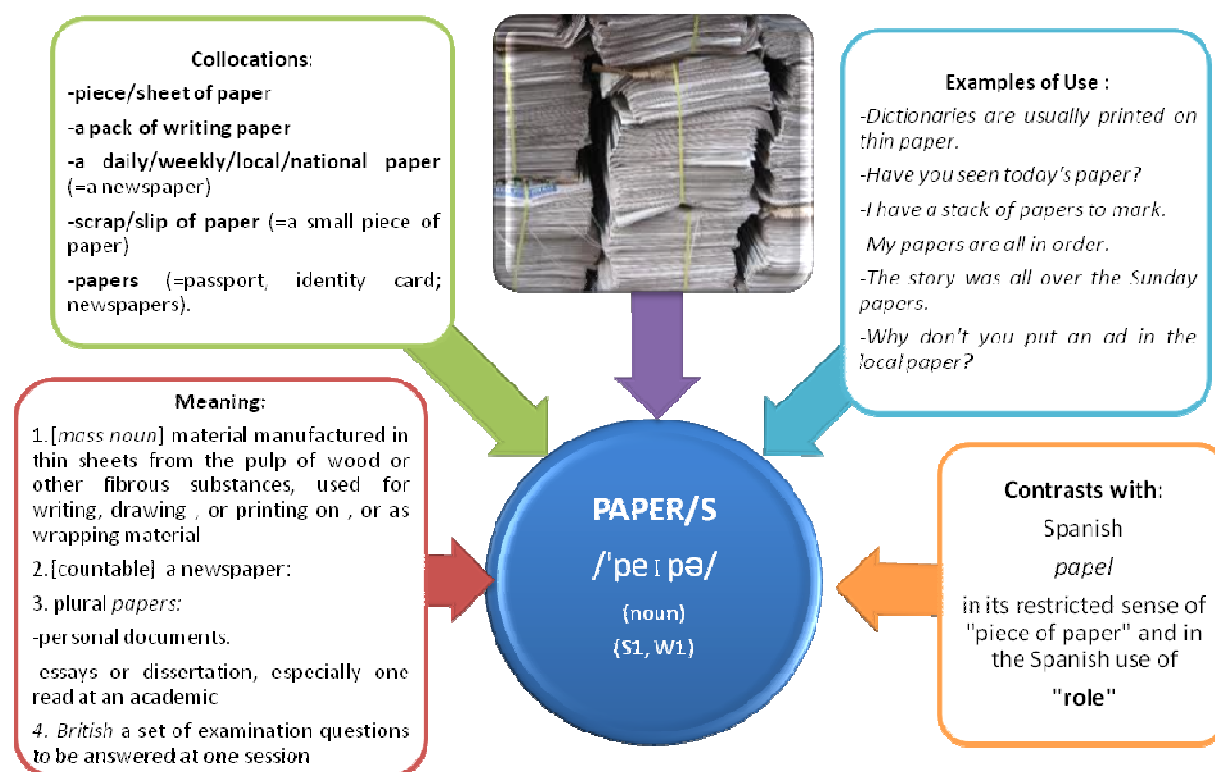
As shown in learner language, students do not have any problems with the English noun *office*, neither in spoken nor written production.



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► **PAPER/S** (mass/plural noun): Origin: Middle English: from Anglo-Norman French *papir*, from Latin *papyrus* 'paper-reed'

The word ***paper*** is a partial false friend with Spanish *papel*; these words sometimes share denotations.



As seen in the previous figure, the words under analysis share some meanings. They both denote “a flat material made from wood on which you can write;” or in the plural *papers* (*papeles* in Spanish), they refer to “official documents.” However, the main differences are that English *paper* may make reference to a newspaper or to a piece of writing or speech on a particular subject written by an expert (*artículo* or *comunicación* in Spanish), while Spanish *papel* cannot be used in that way. The latter can, otherwise, denote an acting role in a film or theatrical performance, as illustrated in the translations provided here:

(EN) PAPER/S = (SP) PERIÓDICO, PAPEL, ESTUDIO  
 (SP) PAPEL = (EN) ROLE; PAPER

The learners’ use of English *paper* shows the three basic meanings of *paper* “paper, the material” (207, 208), “paper, as in newspaper” (209) and “a paper meaning a study” (210, 211). This last use of paper is seen in ICLE but not in SULEC, and it is precisely this meaning of *paper* what prevails in the writings from ICLE.

- ✓ (207) Apart from this, dangerous situations can be created due to the presence of smokers in public places such as bars or discos, I mean, for example a fire can start because a cigarette is near of a curtain or of

- something made of *paper*, and non-smokers can become victims of a situation created by a smoker. (SULEC-WL-AL-DOCUMENT 777)
- ✓ (208) You cannot stop the wood cutting in the Amazon, but you can stop wasting *paper*. The following figures will help you to understand how necessary is to act immediately <ICLE-SP-UCM-0022.3>
  - ✓ (209) We always watch the news or read the *papers* and see how a lot of people can break the law only to become richer. (SULEC-WL-IL-DOCUMENT 265)
  - ✓ (210) No mainstream *paper* or T.V. channel would give a plain answer to this question as they would not put it forth. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0009.4>
  - ✓ (211) There are no progress reports and few are the teachers who demand compositions, essays or research *papers*. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0008.4>
  - ✓ (212) The aim of the present *paper* is to provide the reader with a critical analysis of the topic "Crime does not pay". <ICLE-SP-UCM-0045.4>

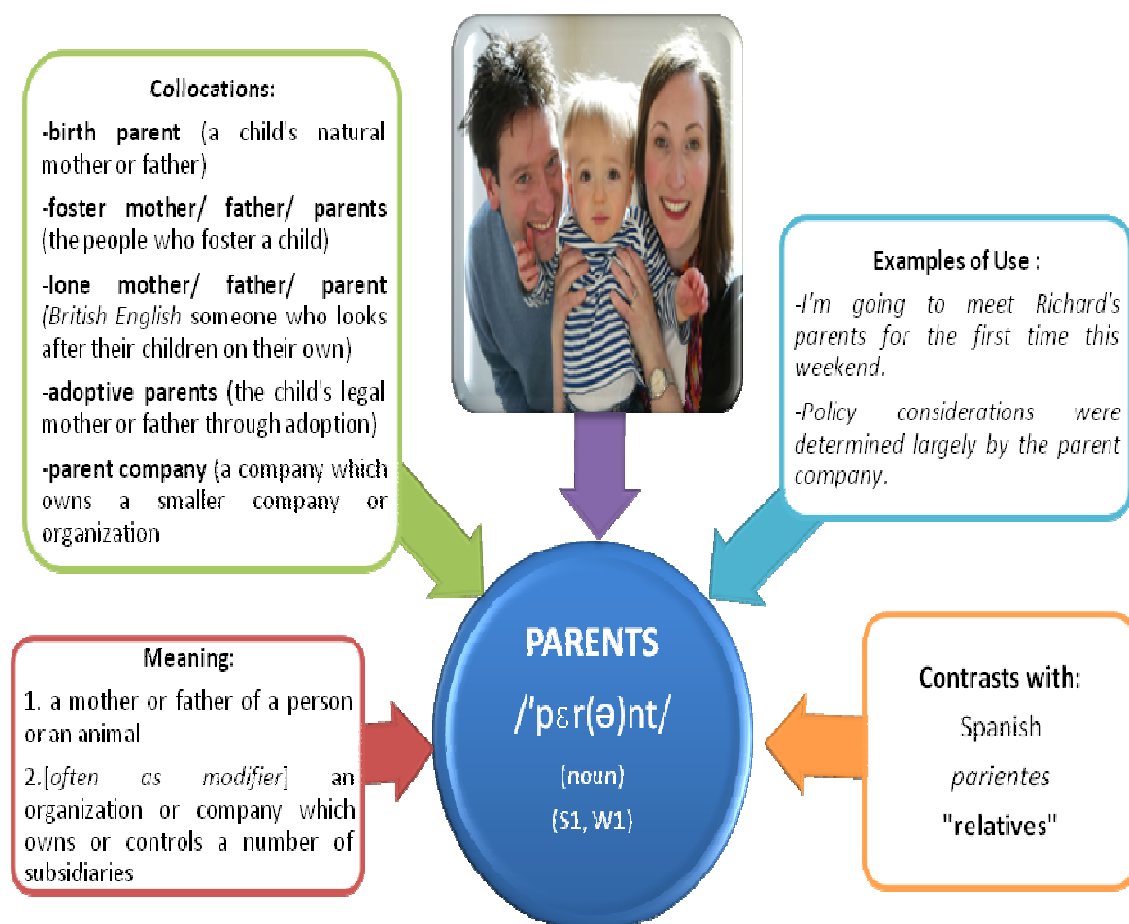
Nevertheless, there are several examples in which this noun is used inaccurately as in the examples below. Examples 213 and 214 are similar; the words *paper* and its plural form *papers* are used to mean “notice (noun).” This use is repeatedly seen all throughout SULEC. In ICLE, students transfer the semantic properties of the Spanish similar word *papel* while using *paper* to mean “a role in a play” (215) and to refer to a piece of writing (216).

- ✗ (213) My opinion is to separate people who smoke and people who don't smoke, but it's difficult, because the middle of the smokers don't pay attention, when they look a *paper* that says "Don't smoke". (SULEC-WL-IL-DOCUMENT 296)
- ✗ (214) Perhaps the people that smoke don't respect the *papers* in the doors that say "No Smoking" (SULEC-WL-IL-DOCUMENT 435)
- ✗ (215) There are many other characters that also show this theme. Antonio and franciscus, two characters that appear in the sub-plot of the play, confirm this contrasts. They disguise themselves, we perfectly notice this conflict: 1) Alsemero, who at this stage of the *paper* is the object of Beatrice Joana's love, wants to test whether she is virgin or not. <ICLE-SP-ALC-0005.1>
- ✗ (216) If you want to read something more on disadvant. go on with this *paper*. I want to deal with Spanish armament, which is rather obsolete. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0006.2>

► **PARENT/S** (noun): Origin: late Middle English: from Old French, from Latin *parent-* 'bringing forth', from the verb *parere*. The verb dates from the mid 17th century

*Parents* and *parientes* are two words which denote some kind of family relations; however, the family relations that they denote are different.





The following translations will also contribute to set these two nouns clearly apart.

(EN) PARENTS= (SP) PADRES

(SP) PARIENTES= (EN) RELATIVES

All examples recorded of *parent* and its plural form *parents* are correct. In theory, this word could be influenced by the Spanish word *pariente(-s)* because of its great formal similarity and its semantic connection (both *parents* and *parientes* refer to the world of family relationships). However, none of the examples shows the use of the English noun *parent(s)* with the meaning of “relative(s).”

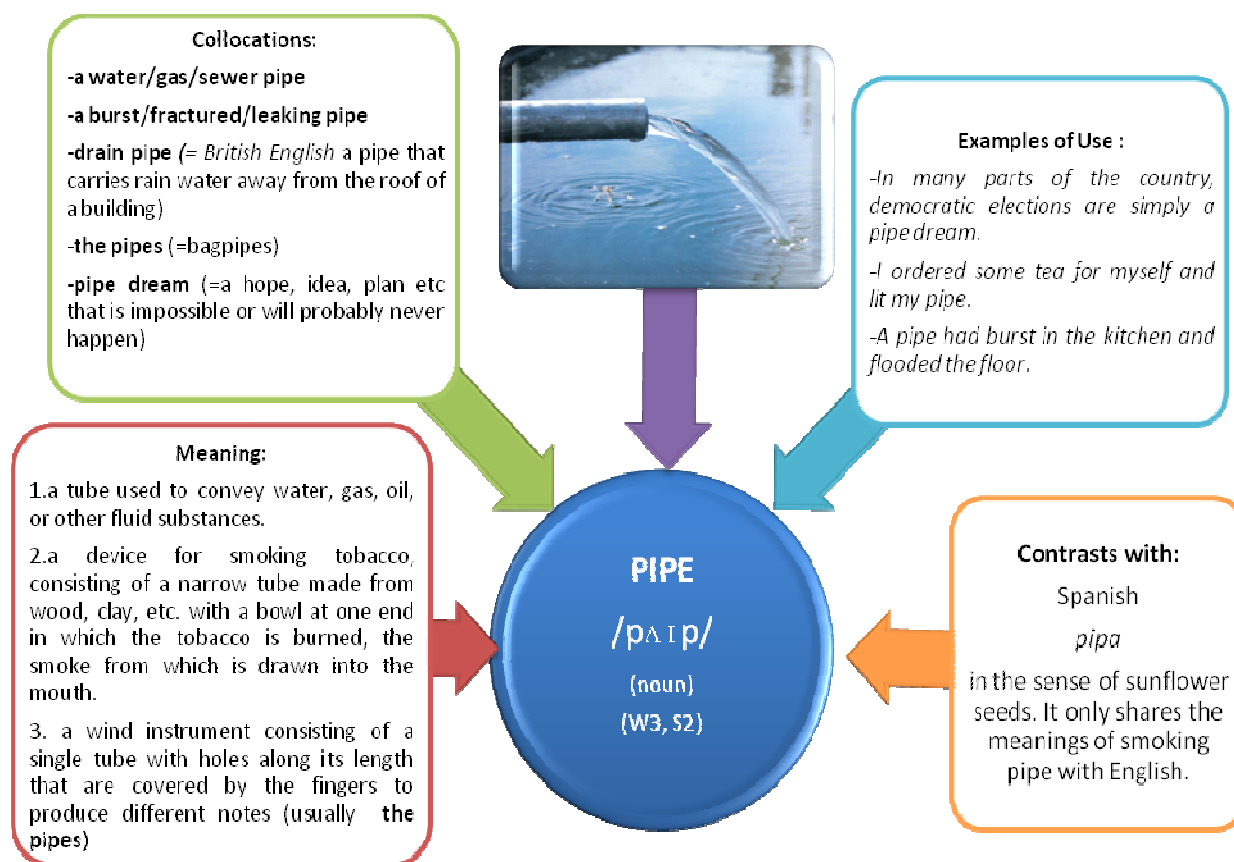
- ✓ (217) ...our *parents* did not have the same luxuries we have now. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0007.2>
- ✓ (218) The idea that a child is going to suffer because of their *parents* sexual condition is absolutely absurd. People should try to be more open and respect all option. (SULEC-WP-AL-DOCUMENT 1332)
- ✓ (219) Now, his *parents* are divorced and because of the problems that they have, one of his brothers has to go to tha psychologist. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0037.3>

- ✓ (220) Also, and as the main teachers, *parents* should let children's imagination develop and help them with this task. <ICLE-SP-UCM-004.10>

We may assume that this word is presented at early stages of second language learning through the recurrent topic of the family, frequently found in English textbooks as a way of making pupils talk about a reality that is very close to them. This could explain the reason why there is no confusion between the English and the Spanish terms.

► **PIPE/S** (noun): Origin: Old English *pīpe* 'musical tube', *pīpian* 'play a pipe', of Germanic origin; related to Dutch *pijp* and German *Pfeife*, based on Latin *pipare* 'to peep, chirp', reinforced in Middle English by Old French *piper* 'to chirp, squeak'

*Pipe* and *pipa* are partial false friends. They both refer to the smoking pipe. However, there are some senses which are not shared. See some of them in the following explanatory figure.



The translations are also of good help to apprehend the semantic differences between the English and the Spanish term. Here are some of the most basic translations of these words:

(EN) PIPE = (SP) TUBERÍA; PIPA; GAITA

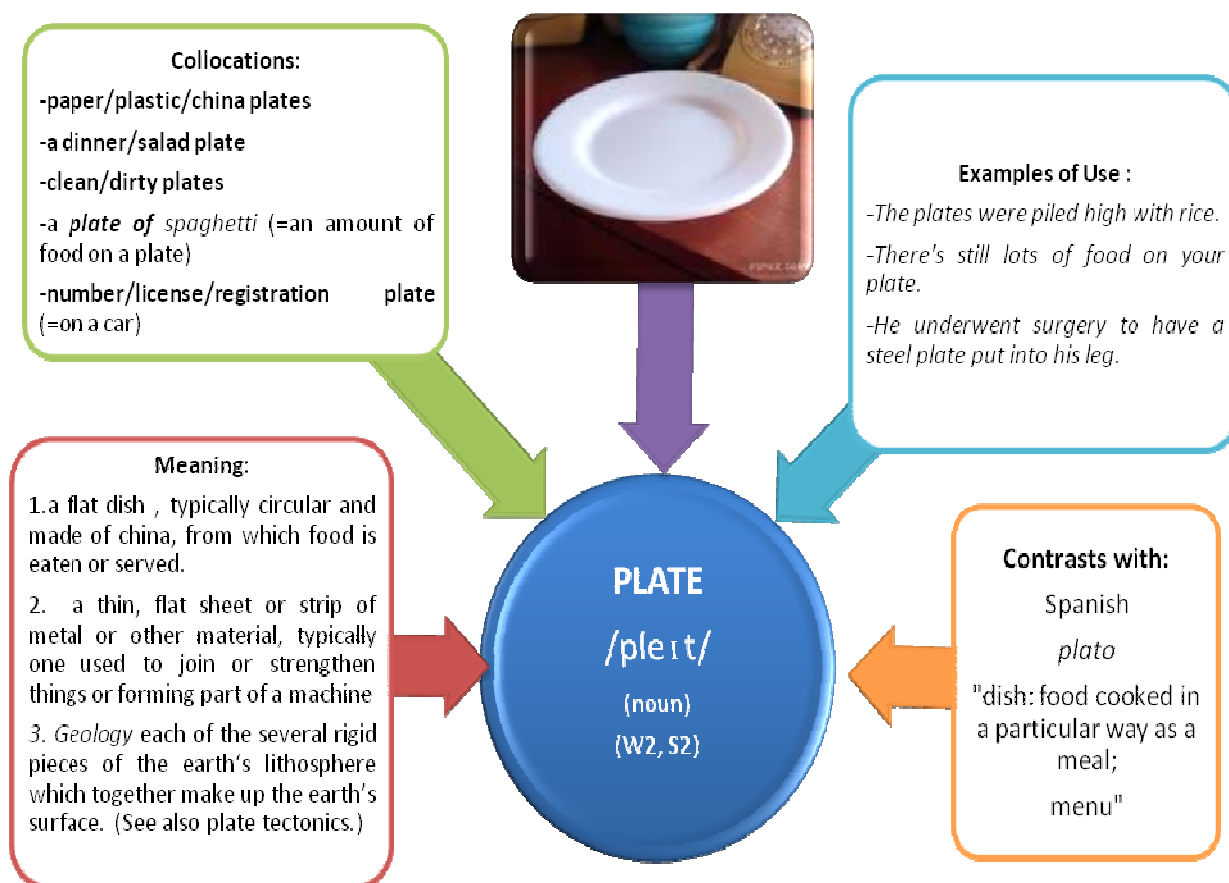
(SP) PIPA = (EN) PIPE, SEED

Learners do not seem to have problems to understand and use the word *pipe* in their written compositions although different results have been given by spoken language. As regards written language, the use of this noun is acceptable. In the second case, the word order and the structure of the phrase varies with respect to the original English form (“the peace of pipe” instead of “the peace pipe”). In the writings of advanced students from ICLE, two high-level collocations including the noun *pipe* are used (e.g. “a pipe dream” and “exhaust pipe,” in examples 223 and 224 respectively).

- ✓ (221) Also, the smoke of cigarettes, *pipes* and so on in some way "destroy" the oxygen that we breathe and make us inspire other elements such as alquitraine and nicotaine instead of pure fresh air. (SULEC-WL-IL-DOCUMENT 425)
- ✓ (222) We can remember the tipical peace act from the indians village "the peace of *pipe*".(SULEC-WL-IL-DOCUMENT 1154)
- ✓ (223) The atmosphere is polluted by the utilization of certain substances. One of these substances is lead which is used with petrol and goes out through the exhaust *pipe* of the car.<ICLE-SP-UCM-0021.3>
- ✓ (224) It must be said that observing the reality this is only a *pipe dream* the situation reaches such extent, that one child per second dies in the world. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0008.5>

► **PLATE** (noun): Origin: Middle English (denoting a flat, thin sheet, usually of metal): from Old French, from medieval Latin *plata* 'plate armour', based on Greek *platus* 'flat.'

*Plate* and *plato* are partial false friends. They share some meanings and some contexts, as can be gathered from the next figure.



The semantic differences between these nouns are expressed in the following translations:

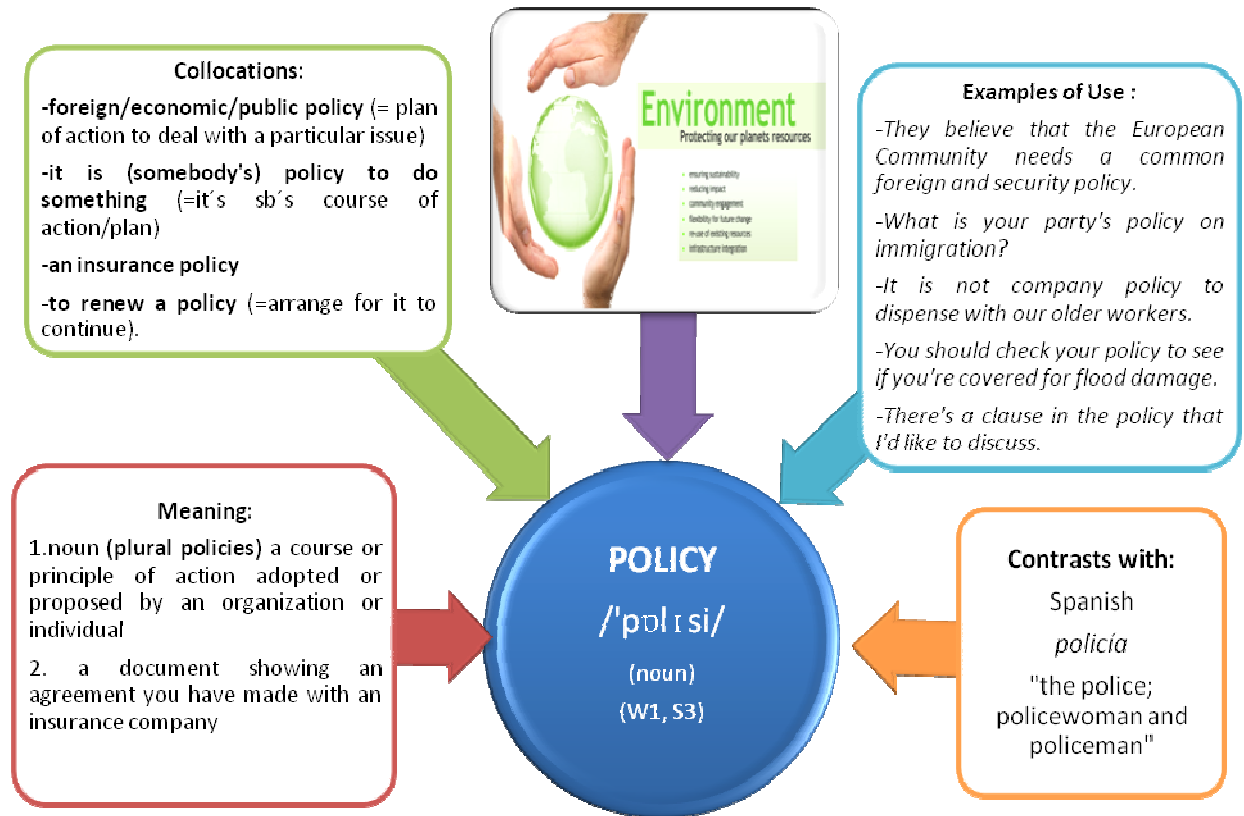
(EN) PLATE = (SP) PLATO; PLACA

(SP) PLATO = (EN) PLATE; DISH OF THE DAY; FIRST COURSE

No instances of this partial FF were found in the learners' written compositions. The only evidence which shows the use of this noun in learner language is the one provided by the spoken component of SULEC (see *section 3.6.2.2.*, pp. 267).

► **POLICY** (noun): Origin: late Middle English: from Old French *policie* 'civil administration', via Latin from Greek *politeia* 'citizenship', from *politēs* 'citizen', from *polis* 'city'

The word **policy** resembles the Spanish noun *policía*, although they differ in their meaning.



There are remarkable differences between English and Spanish in this word:

(EN) POLICY = (SP) PÓLIZA, POLÍTICA

(SP) POLICÍA = (EN) POLICE

The word *policy* is never confused with its Spanish lookalike *policía*. Notwithstanding, *policy* is sometimes misused to refer to “politics,” as the following instances illustrate:

- \* (225) Education and *policy* are two items very related with money too but I don't want to lose my nerves writing about that. (SULEC-WP-AL-DOCUMENT 141)
- \* (226) The only problem is that *policy* always has its upshot on people's lives, and people's lives are much more complicated than theoretical *policy*. Until politicians base their decisions on morality (and in this case it does not seem to exist any kind of relativism) rather than on nonsense propaganda there will be homosexuals with unattended rights (and Muslims attacked undeservedly or black, red, yellow people reduced into ghettos, and so on). (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 508)
- \* (227) A lot of people were in prison because of they were found talking about *policy* so the associations were clandestine. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0017.3>

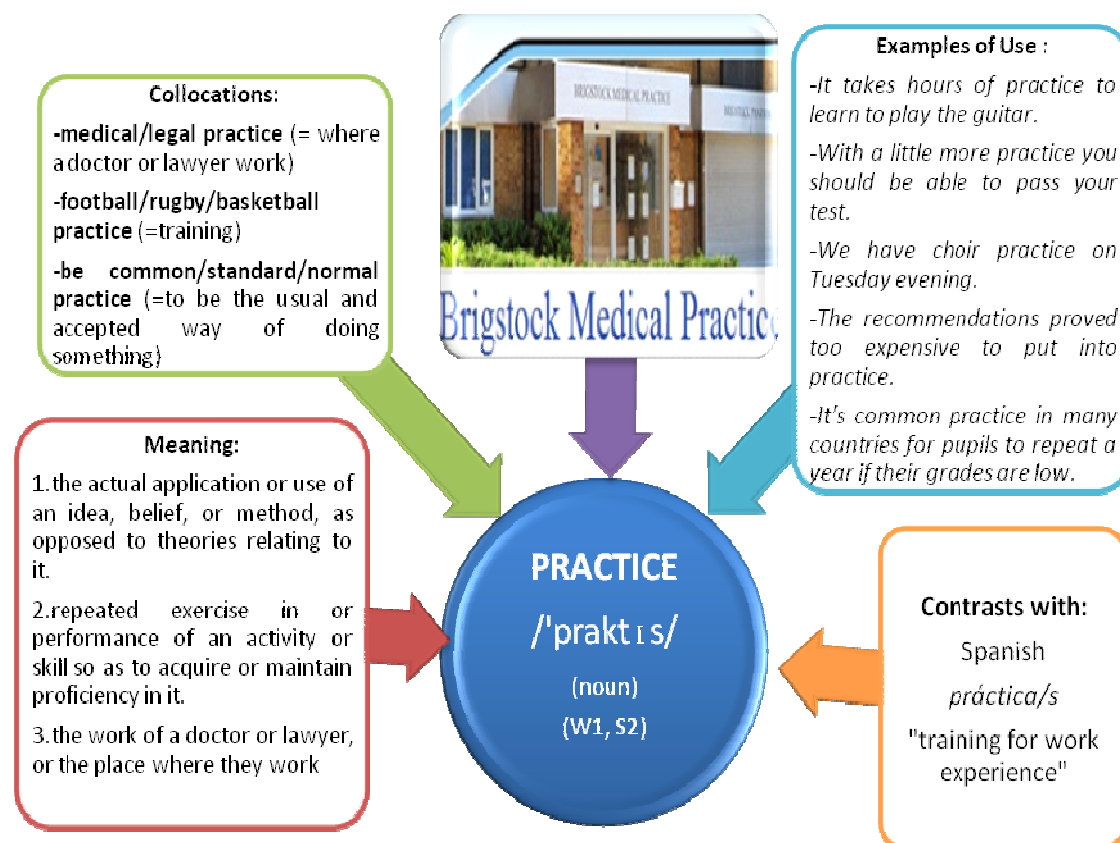
Strictly speaking, inaccuracies of this kind have nothing to do with the false friend phenomenon. We are not before a case in which two similar forms, one from the L1 and the other from the L2, are confused and taken as identical in meaning. In this sense, the data reveal an intralinguistic confusion between the English words *policy* and *politics*. Learners use the former when they mean the latter. This shows that sometimes some lexical errors do not derive from the influence of the students' mother tongue; they are the result of interlingual associations that students themselves build in their minds (Singleton, 1999; Meara and Fitzpatrick, 2000). These intralingual errors have not been registered in the overall results of Table 6 (pp. 76) as the inaccurate use of this term does not derive from the confusion between *policy* and *policía*.

Correct uses of this noun are also found in learner language. The collocations used in 228 and 229 (criminal policies and common policies) make it clear that students have a good productive knowledge of this word.

- ✓ (228) Nowadays, the social rehabilitation is a concept or notion made by the juridical science, particularly by the *Criminal Policy* and its application to the penitentiary method. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0016.5>
- ✓ (229) an ambitious plan not only to promote the economic relations within the members, but also with the ultimate aim to achieve in the long run a united Europe with *common policies*, common taxes, no internal borders whatsoever and even with the implantation of the same currency: the ECU. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0014.2>

► **PRACTICE** (noun): Origin: late Middle English: from *practice* (from Old French *practiser* or medieval Latin *practizare* 'perform, carry out', from Greek *praktikē*, feminine (used as a noun), on the pattern of pairs such as *advise*, *advice*

The English noun *practice* is formally similar to Spanish *práctica*; however, their meanings differ. While the English noun has a wider range of meanings (regular activity, tradition e.g. *It's common practice in the States to tip the hairdresser*, training e.g. *Are you coming to cricket practice this evening?* or work e.g. *a dental/medical/veterinary/legal practice*), the Spanish word *práctica* shares the meanings and uses of "to put sth. into practice; teaching practice" with English, but it has some specific meanings as shown in the translations below.



The multiplicity of meanings of the Spanish noun *práctica* is somewhat reflected in the following translations:

(EN) PRACTICE = (SP) ENTRENAMIENTO; PRÁCTICA; EJERCICIO; CONSULTA  
 (SP) PRÁCTICA = (EN) PRACTICE

It seems necessary to explain that Spanish people use many different expressions which contain this noun, such as *hacer prácticas* “to do one's training;” *contrato en prácticas* “work experience placement;” *estudiantes en prácticas* “students doing n internship;” *período de prácticas* “(practical) training period;” *prácticas profesionales* (for a profession), that is, “professional training, practical training.” Accordingly, there is evidence of these Spanish-based uses of *practice* in the English writings.

Before going into a deeper analysis of the examples found, the issue of spelling must be mentioned. In general, students do not seem to be aware of the fact that there is just one acceptable spelling for this noun; and they sometimes write it with -z-. In fact, there is spelling variation in the learners' use of this word, as we will see in the examples below. There are 77 examples of the word *practise* used as a noun in both ICLE and

SULEC; and there are 176 examples of the correct spelling of the noun with a letter –c– (*practice*). Below there are some examples of the incorrect spelling which, on the other hand, are semantically accurate.

- ✓ (230) Like a man of intellect, he longed for "a great man" to put his "rational, commonsense" ideas into *practise*. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0005.8>
- ✓ (231) There are some Universities that can not to offer any *practise* to their students for several reasons: first, there are too much students, and they can not offer *practise* to all of them. Second, this *practise* implies a cost that many Universities can not pay. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0022.4>
- ✓ (232) All of us think that the *practise* is more important than the theory and in this university there isn't any *practise*. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT DOCUMENT 685)

As regards the semantic analysis of this word, there are some cases which show a clear influence of the Spanish use of its corresponding homograph *práctica* in both SULEC and ICLE. The phrase to *do/realise practices* ("do training or gain work experience") is especially remarkable and recurrently used by Spanish learners of English. This sense is found both in examples where the word is spelled correctly and in examples where this noun is misspelled (with an –s–). Some examples are shown below.

- \* (233) English as a second language is nowadays something needed and studied by vast amounts of people who are either self taught learners or enrolled in languages courses do *practice*. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0011.1>
- \* (234) Some universities like sciences ones realise *practices* for students, but in case of Facults of Arts this situation is very different. Because in them, none practice is taken. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0053.3>
- \* (235) In addition they can do a few *practices* in enterprises where, if they are good, the boss will can offer them a place in his enterprise for ever (SULEC-SP-IL-DOCUMENT 748)
- \* (236) It would be fantastic that students had laboral *practise*, but to do the *practise* they have to know the theory. (SULEC-WP-AL-DOCUMENT 254)
- \* (237) They know what learn, but sometime they don't know how. There is others university degrees where is necessary doing *practise*. I'm thinking in a doctor, who never did *practise* ... (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 1199)
- \* (238) The lack of *practices* in universities present two great problems. On the one hand student's lack of preparation and, on the other hand the lack of jobs because of this bad preparation. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0001.3>

Nevertheless, there are several examples containing this word which illustrate the correct meaning and use of the English term. In most texts, this noun appears to be appropriately used. Students normally draw a contrast between the terms "theory and



practice,” and use phrases such as “provide enough practice for sth.,” “put sth. into practice.” The use of a highly idiomatic expression such as “practice makes perfect” is outstanding here.

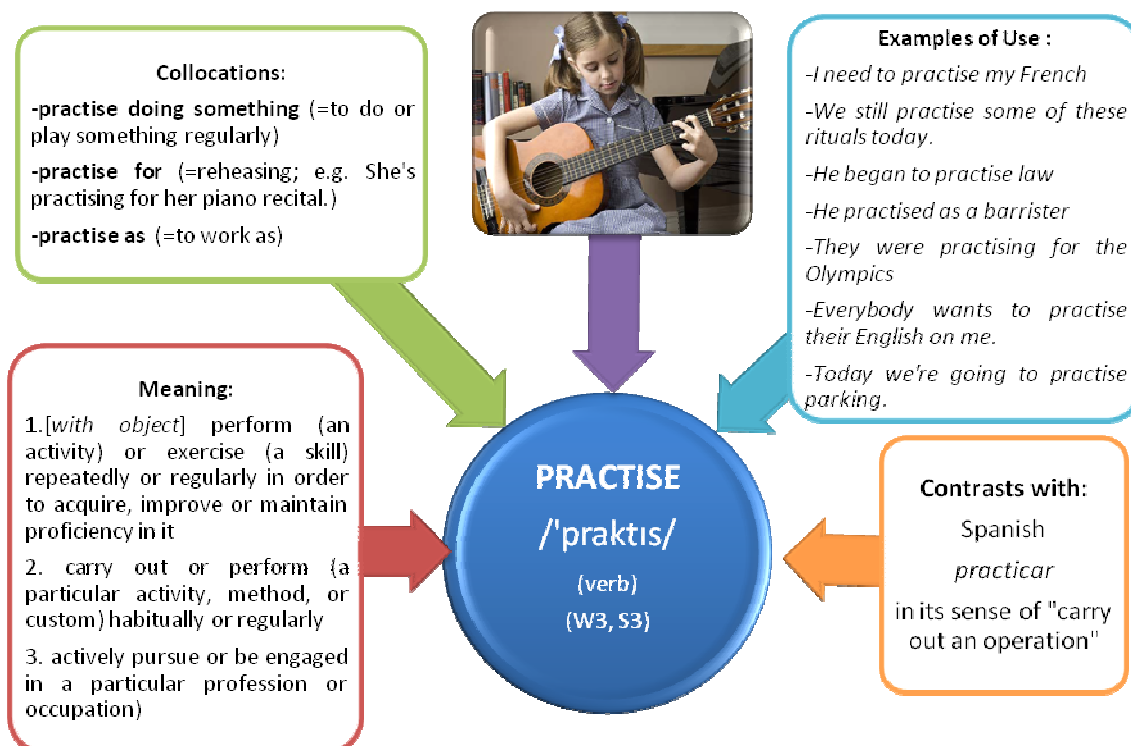
- ✓ (239) According to that proverb which says ‘*Practice* makes perfect’ (in fact, the reality shows it), the inclusion of a wider period of professional training in all the university careers would be something necessary nowadays. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0036.3>
- ✓ (240) It is said that most university degrees are theoretical and do not provide students enough *practice*. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 1341)
- ✓ (241) I am afraid that this *practice* is becoming very common among some individuals who own a "stainless behaviour". <ICLE-SP-UCM-0006.1>
- ✓ (242) University has to give you knowledge about everything, theory and *practice*, but when you are studying translation, like me, xxx *practice* has to be more important than theory. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 291)

One thing to be commented on is that *practice* normally occurs in its plural form; the problem here is that this noun in the plural would acquire a different meaning in English (that of customary habits). The following examples illustrate this use and they are not considered to be suitable since they do not meet the purpose of the writer:

- ✗ (243) There is also another possibility which would be to include *practices* in the degree (SULEC-WP-AL-DOCUMENT 139)
- ✗ (244) I think that this kind of universities should try to plan some *practices* in organisations or another places where students could develop their theoretical knowledges and this should take place at least the last month of every course. (SULEC-SP-IL-DOCUMENT 295)
- ✗ (245) One solution could be that at time that we are at university, or at least the last two years, we must doing *practices* in a organization, above all if we are studing economics or xx business management (SULEC-SP-IL-DOCUMENT 1197)

► **PRACTISE** (verb): Origin: late Middle English: from Old French *practiser* or medieval Latin *practizare*, alteration of *practicare* 'perform, carry out', from *practica* 'practice', from Greek *praktikē*, feminine (used as a noun), of *praktikos*

The verbs *practise* and *practicar* share some senses. However, the English term is broader and embraces a number of contexts in which the Spanish verb *practicar* does not sound natural.



The semantic differences between these two similar verbs are reflected in the translations below:

(EN) PRACTISE = (SP) ENTRENAR, PRACTICAR; ENSAYAR; EJERCER

(SP) PRACTICAR = (EN) PRACTISE; PLAY; PERFORM

For the analysis of this verb, I had to filter the initial hits that came out from the two databases used. This was due to the fact that students use this verb form as if it were a noun. Thus, those examples in which the -s- spelling of *practise* appear with the function of a noun were here disregarded; for that reason, they were included in the analysis of the noun presented earlier. These are some examples:

- ✓ (246) All of us think that the *practise* is more important than the theory and in this university there isn't any *practise*. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 685)
- ✓ (247) If one of them xx tries to get a job, he or she needs experience, *practise*, value to keep it. (SULEC-WP-AL-DOCUMENT 857)

The remaining cases of *practise* as a verb were then analysed as regards their meanings and word combinations. Perfectly established word collocations, including the verb *practise*, as in “practise sports” or “practise your speaking skills,” have been attested.

- ✓ (248) One person that *practise* deport need a good health they then they shouldn't be smoke and they shouldn't be smell the smoke. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 911)
- ✓ (249) If you like languages you'll go on studying Filology or Translation in a Humanities Faculty with the hope of *practising* your speaking skills. But you find again the same sentences structures, grammar exercises and so on. So you'll have to *practise* your level going abroad with the contact of the people of this country. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 258)

In the analysis of this verbal form, I also included the other possible spelling of *practise*, that is to say, the American spelling *practice* (25 instances of this spelling were found in both corpora). The meaning is what is assessed in my analysis, not its spelling or form.

- ✓ (250) On the other hand, they need to *practice* their knowledge in order not to forget it, and for being objectives in their work, and, in sum, for being a good lawyer. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0022.4>
- ✓ (251) But university isn't always so good than it would be. I mean that university doesn't prepare student as autentic future profesional. When you are in the university, you study a lot of teories but you don't *practice* it. (SULEC-SP-IL-DOCUMENT 1153)
- ✓ (252) The theory knowledge we are teached in University is absolutely necessary but we need to learn to *practice* it in real life. (SULEC-SP-AL-DOCUMENT 851)
- ✓ (253) Smoking is the only vice which can have mortal consequences for people who don't *practice* it. (SULEC-SP-IL-DOCUMENT 311)

However, the range of strange uses and combinations of this verb that students use is more outstanding: *\*the religion practise the respect*; *\*people don't practise their job*; *\*people do not practise this bad habit*. These word combinations are incorrect as students should choose a different verb.

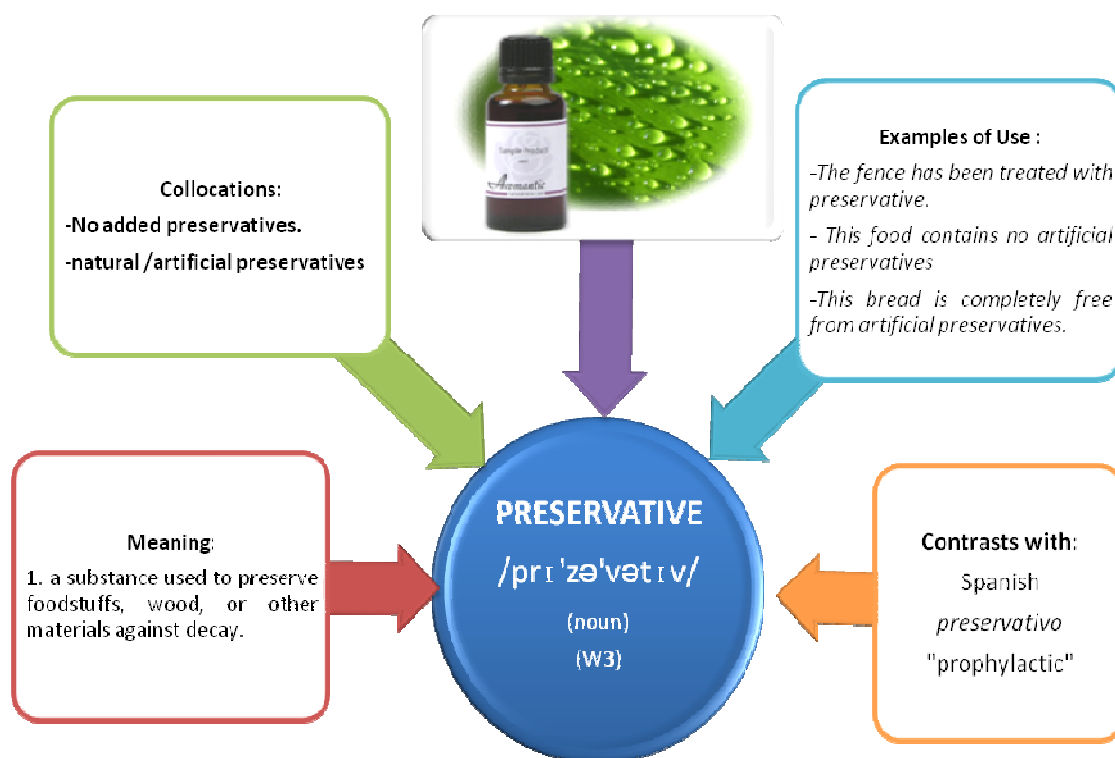
- ✗ (254) the catolic marriage, the religion *practise* the respect and they consider the homosexual “pecadores”. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 1194)
- ✗ (255) For this I think that if in one public place is you have to bear the people's opinion because the mayority of the people do not *practise* this bad habit (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 974)
- ✗ (256) whose people don't *practise* their job but they improve their language in a real context. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 1358)

The past participle of *practise* (*practised*) is used to mean “practical.” In English, the verb that generally goes with job is not “to practise a job,” but “to perform a job.” This error does not have anything to do with a question of semantic interference from the students’ mother tongue. Hence, this would not be registered as errors in the chart of final results.

- × (257) For example, careers like Translation, in my opinion, are xxx too theoretical and they should be more *practised* because, in the future, our job will be only *practised*. I think that we are wasting a lot of time studying subjects that have no sense. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 379)

► **PRESERVATIVE** (noun): Origin: late Middle English: via Old French from medieval Latin *praeservativus*, from late Latin *praeservat-* 'kept', from the verb *praeservare*

In spite of the formal similarities between *preservative* and *preservativo*, these words have different meanings and are used in different contexts. The English term makes reference to those substances used to preserve food, while the Spanish item refers to a contraceptive method. See further information in the figure that follows:



The semantic differences are clearly seen in the following translations:

(EN) PRESERVATIVE = (SP) CONSERVANTE

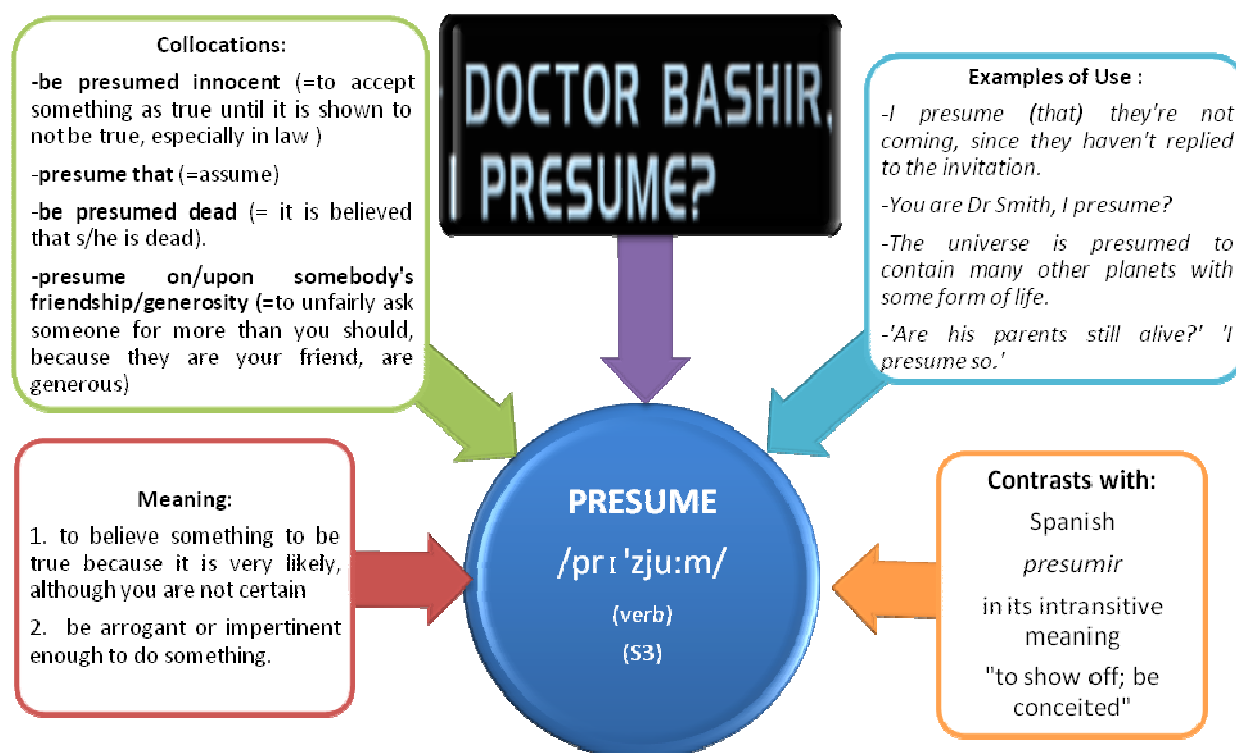
(SP) PRESERVATIVO = (EN) PROPHYLACTIC

This term is unlikely to appear in the corpora as the topics of the compositions did not favour the use of this word. In fact, it does not occur. In order to compensate for the lack of data regarding this noun, the second study includes a warning label with this word (see chapter 4, sections 4.6.1 and 4.6.2., pp. 365- 366, 390). The students'

translations of this warning would provide us with some information on the learners' interpretation of this lexical item.

► **PRESUME** (verb): Origin: late Middle English: from Old French *presumer*, from Latin *praesumere* 'anticipate' (in late Latin 'take for granted'), from *prae* 'before' + *sumere* 'take.'

*Presume* ("suppose") and *presumir* ("to show off, to be conceited") are very similar in form.



The existing differences are clearly seen in the translations given below:

(EN) PRESUME = (SP) SUPONER

(SP) PRESUMIR = (EN) TO SHOW OFF

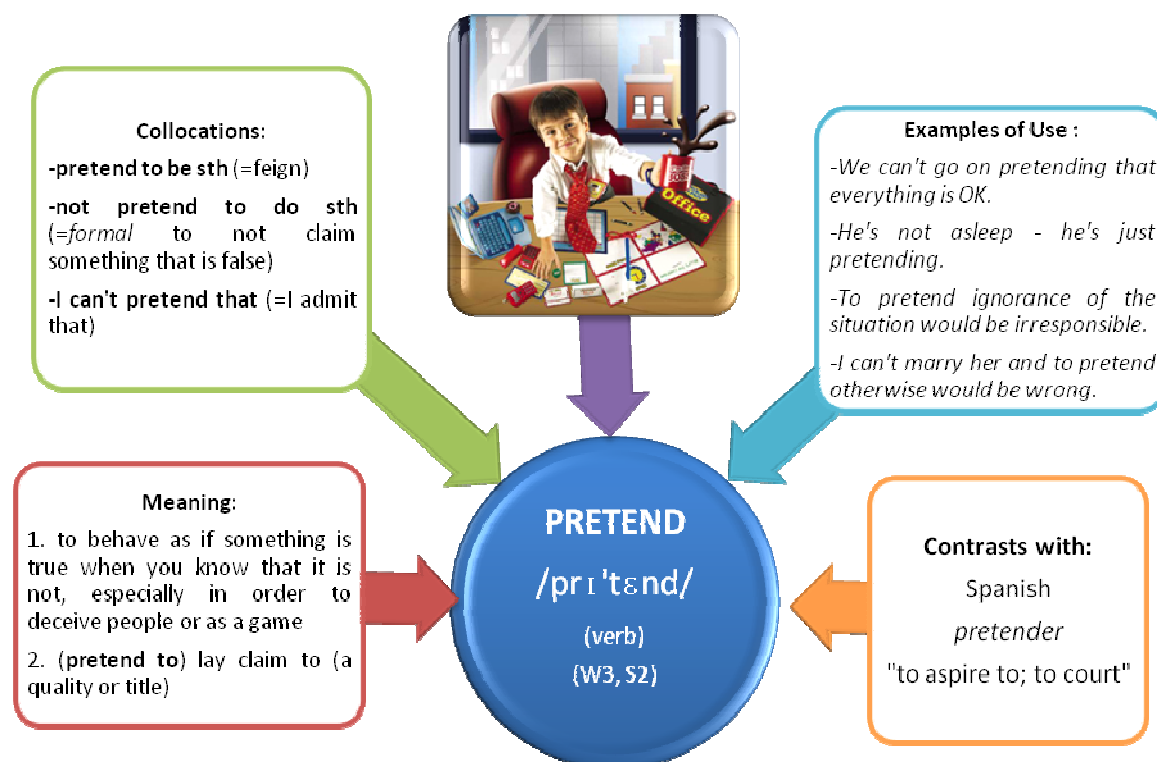
This frequently leads SSEFL astray. The English item does not appear to be very frequent in the corpora analysed. However, these two verbs are very likely to be confused. The only sample text which contains this word includes the past participle of the verb (*presumed*), which is used as an adjective, to express the idea of "hypothetical." If we balance both the meaning and the use of this lexical item, the

conclusion is that this word does not fit into the intended communicative purpose; in addition, its use as a prepositive adjective might mislead the recipient's attention. The word needed here would be "alleged."

- × (258) Mr Hardcastle feels ofended and he thinks that these two *presumed* polite englishmen are very rude. So he thinks that Mr. Marlow is no longer a good husband for his daughter. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0009.6>

► **PRETEND** (verb): Origin: late Middle English: from Latin *praetendere* 'stretch forth, claim', from *prae* 'before' + *tendere* 'stretch'. The adjective dates from the early 20th century.

*Pretend* and *pretender* are total false friends in English and Spanish. Both verbs refer to different actions.



The translations provided here give clear evidence of the semantic divergence of these verbs:

(EN) TO PRETEND = (SP) FINGIR

(SP) PRETENDER = (EN) TO ASPIRE TO; TO WOO

Examples of the verb *pretend* and its related forms: *pretends* for the present and *pretended* for the past, are found in the corpora. English *pretend* whose meaning is

“feign” has nothing to do with Spanish *pretender* “try to get something” and even “woo.” However, when analysing the examples where this item occurs, we notice that the Spanish meaning of *pretender* (“intend”) is transferred to the English word. There is evidence of this in both corpora: SULEC and ICLE.

- × (259) I don't *pretend* that everybody stop to smoke, but I *pretend* that they do it when they were alone xx or with others smokers. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 889)
- × (260) Finally I think there are enough places where you can't smoke, for example, at public transport, at hospitals, at some buildings, at planes... why don't they think it is enough? what do they *pretend*? (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 223)
- × (261) “Money is the root of all evil”. Many good things can be done with it, and not everyone spends it without careing. And we can not *pretend* to erase it from te world, because such thing is just completely impossible. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 290)

The expression **I don't *pretend* that** (259), or its erroneous variant in 262, **I am not *pretend* to**, are word-for-word translations of the Spanish expression *no pretendo que*.

- × (262) I am not *pretend* to search the origin of money or who invented money, I just want to show my divagations about something in what people. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0033.3>

Example 263 also show traces of linguistic interference (*pretend* is used to mean “aspire to”), but this time the base form is inflected and modified to be adapted to the context.

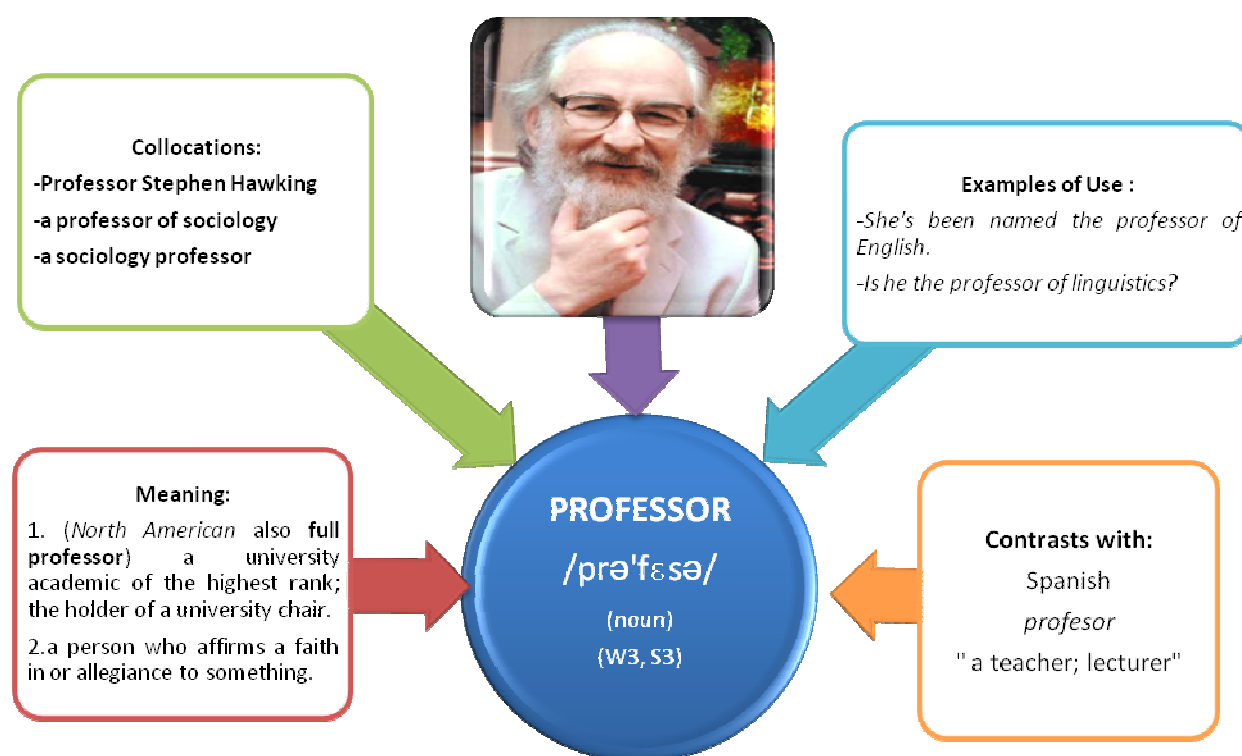
- × (263) Since people live together, there have always been someone who *pretends* to dominate the others, so I guess that society means inequality. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0013.5>
- × (264) The general tone in which these comedies are written is very smart, the characters are not ridiculized but they are treated with tolerance, and with sense of humour and in this way the audience can learn what is *pretended* by the writer. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0004.8>

Once again, we have two examples of negative transfer before us. This contrasts with examples 265 and 266 below, which stick to the English meaning and use of this verb.

- ✓ (265) This reminds us that the play is based on a fabliaux in which a fox (Volpone) *pretends* to be dead to attack and eat the birds of pray (the legacy hunters). <ICLE-SP-ALC-0008.1>
- ✓ (266) The plot and subplot in The Changeling are connected to the same idea: appearances and reality. They *pretend* to be what they are not. <ICLE-SP-ALC-0010.1>

► **PROFESSOR:** Origin: late Middle English: from Latin *professor*, from *profess-* 'declared publicly', from the verb *profiteri*.

This word has been included in the analysis because Spanish *profesor* and British English *professor* differ in meaning significantly. Although they seem to be equivalent terms at first sight, these two items do not share the same meaning. These terms allude to different teaching professions: the academic status and the benefits of these people are completely different.



*Professor* is the British English equivalent of Spanish “catedrático,” that is, being a *professor* in a British university involves being a “university teacher of the highest rank.” By contrast, the Spanish word *profesor* is used to refer to “any teacher.” This is illustrated with their typical translations:

(EN) PROFESSOR = (SP) CATEDRÁTICO

(SP) PROFESOR = (EN) ANY TEACHER

In addition to this, the word *professor* is one of these examples of FF within varieties of the same language (see chapter 1, section 1.3.1., pp. 26). Therefore, language teachers



might take advantage of this lexical item to explain how one word has acquired completely different meanings in different contexts. Thus, in a British context, the variety of English we are considering, the noun *professor*, has a more restrictive use. It refers to a “university teacher of the highest rank,” while in American English, the word refers to “any university teacher” in a general sense.<sup>53</sup>

In order to be consistent with the rest of the survey, the British English meaning is taken as a reference. Then, if we take into account the British variety of English with its restrictive notion of *professor*, that of “university teacher of the highest rank; a holder of a university chair” (or *full professor* in American English), then students are using this lexical item inaccurately. When they use *professor*, they really mean any university teacher (see 267 and 268).

- \* (267) I could say that most of university courses are valueless but sometimes you can find a good *professor* who knows how to open your eyes, and then you realize that not everything was lost. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 1118)
- \* (268) As so many people go to university, teaching becomes a difficult task. The number of students per class is quite large, that is why *professors* are very limited, and classes are more theoretical than practical. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0012.3>

As a conclusion, it can be stated that learners use the word *professor* with a general meaning, without making any distinction between a primary or secondary teachers, and a university lecturer or professor. The two examples below support this same idea.

- \* (269) a person who want become a doctor, *professor* or scientist should have studies which reflect his/her preparation." (SULEC-WL-IL-DOCUMENT 409)
- \* (270) There are other problems which can also affect [education at university] to a large extent. For instance, the time we lose all through the day because of transport or timetables, the *professors* subjectivity when it comes to impart their subjects - here we are referring to the fact that several *professors* impart the same subject in a very different way, it affects the general education scheme created for each career-, the wrong evaluation of the students -this does not require more explanation-, and so forth. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0036.3>

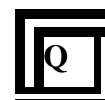
In spite of having this general tendency, there are examples in which the word *professor* can be interpreted as applied to a university lecturer of the highest rank. The following example makes a distinction between teachers who could be teaching at primary and

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<sup>53</sup> *Professor* is a teacher of the highest rank in a department of a British university, or a teacher of high rank in an American university or college. As we are analysing false friends between British English and European Spanish, *professor* is considered to be a teacher of the highest rank and the translation of this term in Spanish would be “catedrático.”

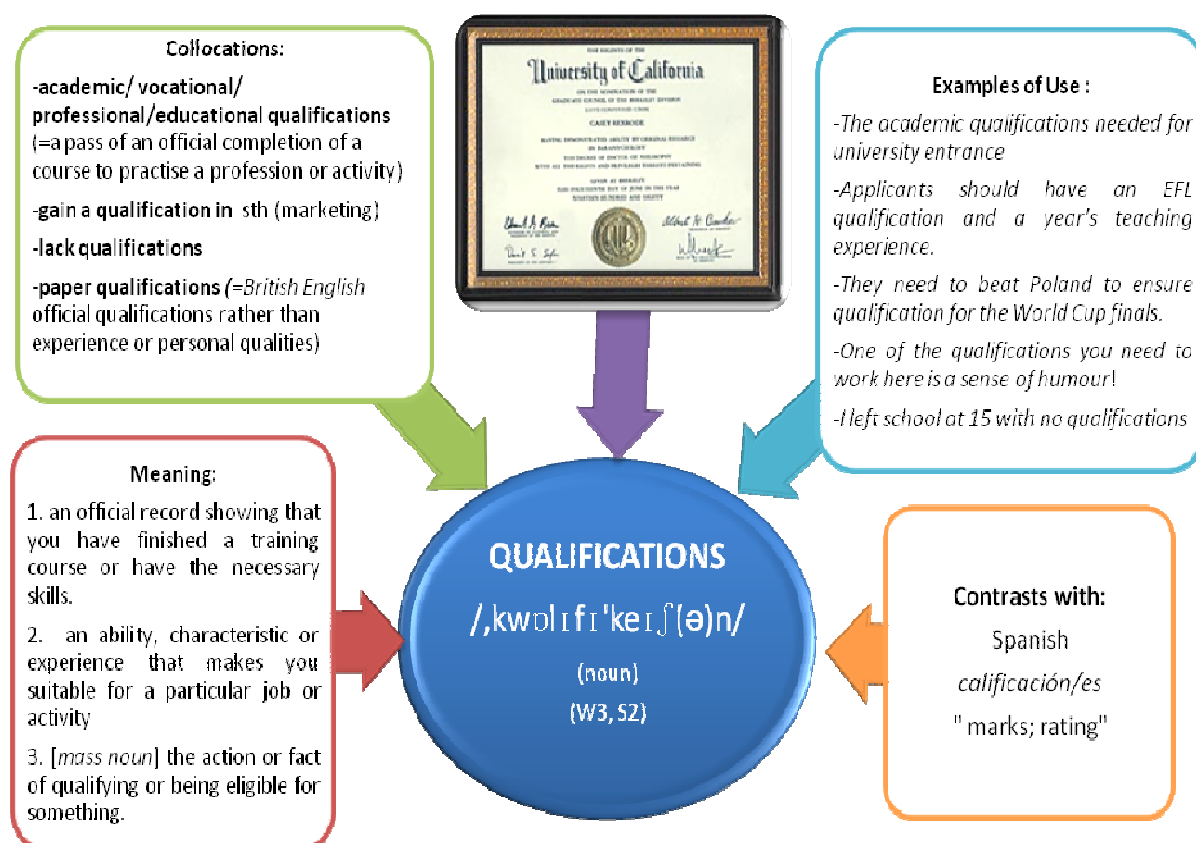
secondary schools, lecturers who might be teaching at higher levels of education and professors at university.

- \* (271) Teachers, *professors* and lecturers spend almost all classes explaining theory, therefore, talking and talking. I don't mean that this is bad or absurd, but bored. (SULEC-WL-AL-DOCUMENT 148)



► **QUALIFICATIONS** (noun): Origin: mid 16th century: from medieval Latin *qualificatio(n)-*, from the verb *qualificare*.

Having *qualifications* in English means having qualities for some function, office, or the like (e.g. *He has no qualifications to be a teacher*), as opposed to Spanish *calificaciones*, meaning “marks” (e.g. *Ha obtenido una calificación excelente en matemáticas*).



The translations below help us see the semantic differences more clearly:

(EN) QUALIFICATIONS = (SP) TITULACIÓN, MÉRITOS; CLASIFICACIÓN

(SP) CALIFICACIONES = (EN) MARKS, RESULTS

This word occurs four times in the two corpora: three of them in SULEC and one of them in ICLE. As shown in 272 and 273, this lexical item seems to pose problems for Spanish students of English as a foreign language (SSEFL).

- × (272) **On the other hand, the *qualifications* that you are done are about that, not above your practise or something so you have to learn the theoric. (SULEC-WP-AL-DOCUMENT 716)**
- × (273) **At some schools, teachers give high *qualifications* or students pass although they haven't enough level. This is so unfair for the other people. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 988)**

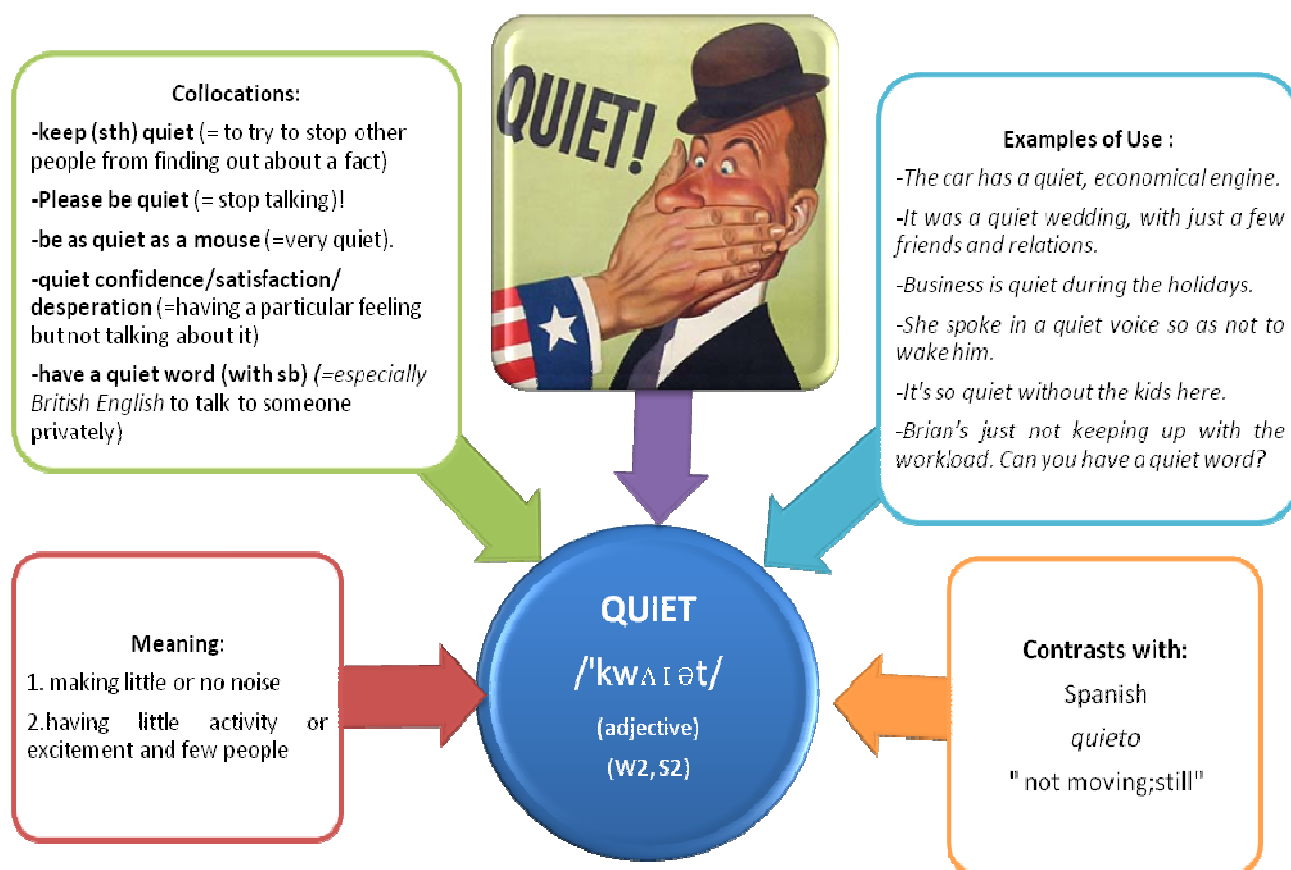
What students do is to apply the Spanish meaning of *calificaciones* to the English word *qualifications*, that is, students use *qualifications* to mean “marks” in an academic context.

► **QUIET** (adjective):<sup>54</sup> Origin: Middle English (originally as a noun denoting peace as opposed to war): via Old French, based on Latin *quies*, *quiet-* 'repose, quiet.'

*Quiet* and *quieto* refer to a state of calmness. However, the English adjective denotes “silence,” while the Spanish term does not necessarily imply a silent mode, but a motionless state. Therefore, the contexts in which they occur are partially the same. The figure (next page) gives more details on the characteristics of this high-frequency English adjective which is commonly found both in speech and writing.

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<sup>54</sup> Students confuse **quiet** (=with little noise) and **quite** (=fairly) but these examples are not recorded in the final count.



The semantic similarities and differences between Spanish *quieto* and English *quiet* are shown in the translations that follow:

(EN) QUIET = (SP) TRANQUILO/A; CALLADO

(SP) QUIETO/A = (EN) STILL, MOTIONLESS; QUIET

The English adjective *quiet* can be used to describe people meaning “silent, causing no disturbance,” or places and animals meaning “peaceful, still.” The following examples convey these meanings; they are considered correct despite the inaccuracies in the surrounding co-text.

- ✓ (274) Consequently, in general terms, religion is just another method to keep people *quiet* and resigned. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0007.5>
- ✓ (275) With very few advances it was possible to live in a pleasantly and *quiet* way, using the nature and the imagination, the creativity and ability of mankind. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0007.3>
- ✓ (276) people generally xx had not information over the effects of the cigarretes. Only thirty years ago, people commenced to receive information. Why? Because in the 70's existed a large companies, xx and this companies were interesting in the profit of the tobacco. This larges companies was *quiet*, and the information about the risk of the tobacco. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 1185)

Apart from this, this item may be rather problematic for Spanish students, as data extracted from SULEC clearly show. Learners resort to this form and use it as an adverb. Thus *quiet* is used as an adverb in 277, possibly instead of *quietly*. Although it is common for native speakers to use *quiet* as an adverb, this is not generally regarded as the standard form (Biber *et. al*, 2007: 542). Anyway, these examples are not counted as wrong uses in the final results since this error has its origin in an intralingual confusion.

- \* (277) xxx I am in favor that people who xx xx have this addiction can smoke *quiet* in that place (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 667)

Furthermore, students have difficulties to distinguish between *quiet* and *quite*, as shown in example 278. It is quite possible that they make associations between these two words both at the level of spelling and pronunciation.

- \* (278)...homosexual marriages [ ... ] the images of these couples are *quiet* easy to find and as a result the way to win acceptance of the human beings. (SULEC-WP-AL-DOCUMENT 670)

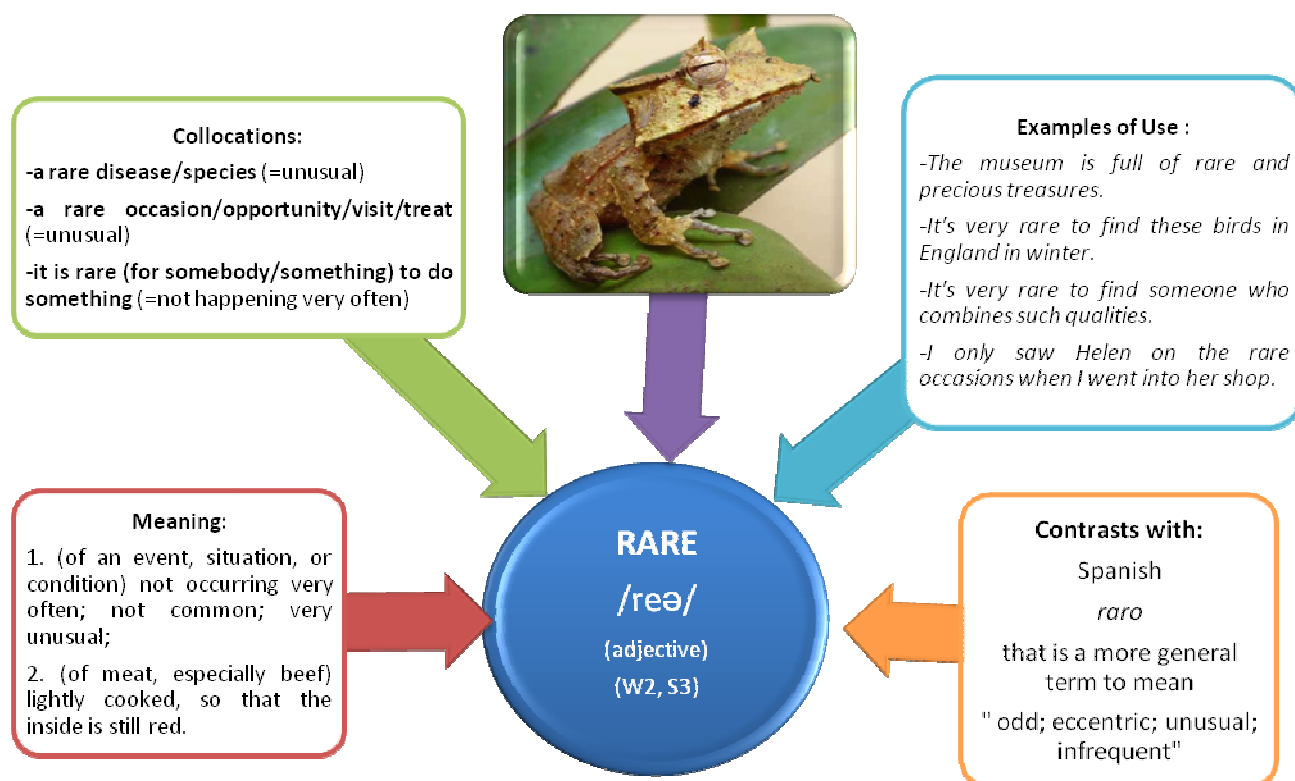
This represents another case of intralingual confusion, that is, students fail to distinguish appropriately between two lexical items in the target language. In consequence, this is not reflected or included in the final calculations.



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► **RARE** (adjective): Origin: late Middle English (in the sense ‘widely spaced, infrequent’): from Latin *rarus*

The English word *rare* and Spanish *raro* are partial false friends; these lexical items share some senses in both languages.



These two adjectives share the idea of “uncommon;” however, there are additional meanings which they do not share. For instance, the English term *rare* can be applied to food and means the opposite of “well-done,” while Spanish *raro* is not used in this context. Anyway, the translations below illustrate the main divergences in meaning:

(EN) RARE = (SP) RARO; POCO HECHO

(SP) RARO = (EN) STRANGE; UNUSUAL

Instances containing the adjective “rare” show that students know what it means; structures, such as “it is rare that,” and collocations, such as “a rare mental disorder,” tell us that students know how to use this word.

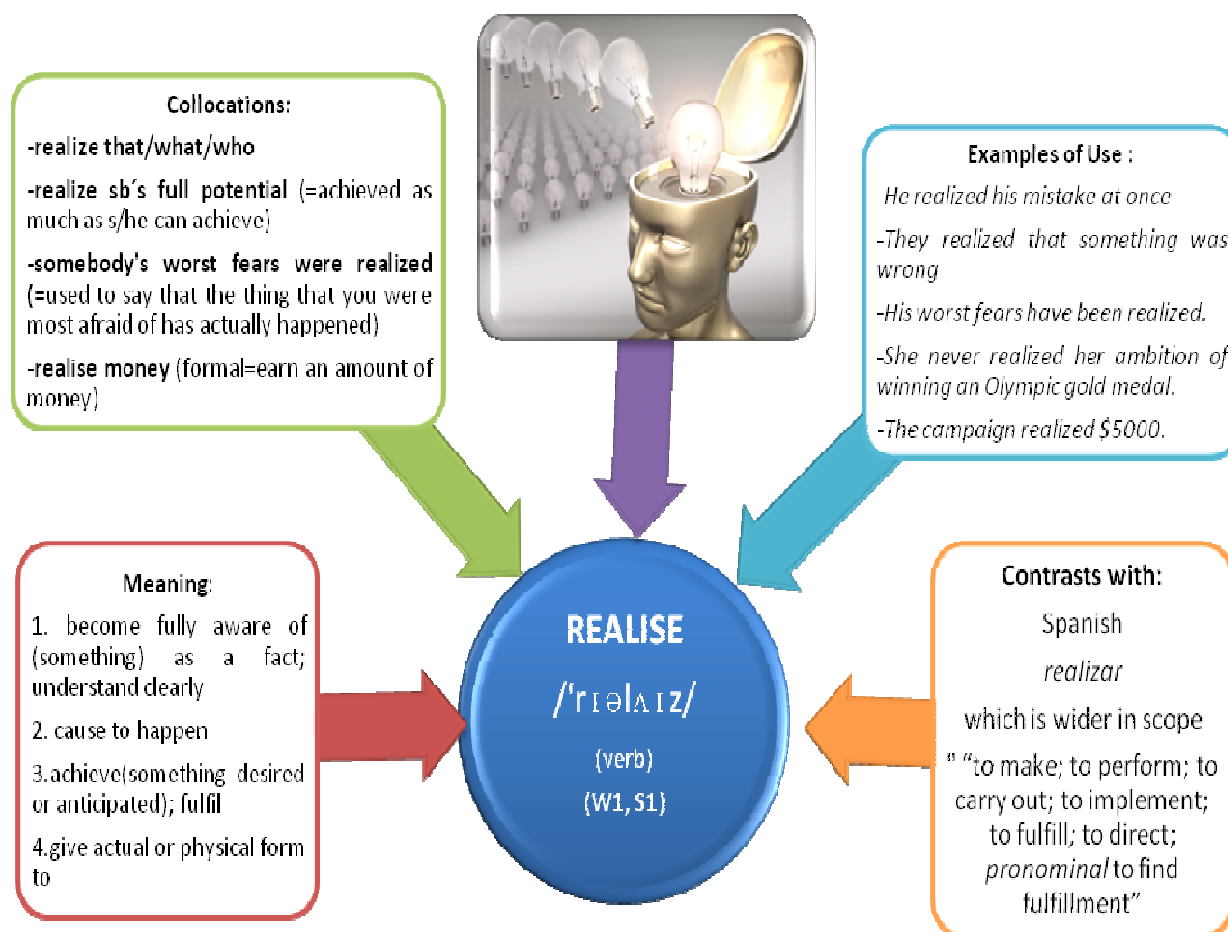
- ✓ (279) In every table there is ashtry, which invite people to smoke and , when they finish and they are full, it's very *rare* that waiters take it away, and you have to it with that at the table. (SULEC-WL-AL-DOCUMENT 766)
- ✓ (280) However, some religious institutions believe both homosexuals and lesbians suffer from a *rare* mental disorder. (SULEC-WL-IL-DOCUMENT 1279)

However, there are two examples from ICLE (\*this marriage seems us xxx rare and \*this concepts and ideas sound really rare) where the choice of the adjective *rare* sounds inappropriate pragmatically speaking.

- ✱ (281) the marriage of persons of the same sex xxx should be something with what everybody should live. This marriage seems us xxx *rare* because xxx it isn't "normal" xxx (SULEC-WL-AL-DOCUMENT 443)
- ✱ (282) religion alienation is doing a social function [...] If we put into effect this concepts and ideas to the present they sound really *rare*, and they can even produce us laugh. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0051.3>

► **REALISE/REALIZE** <sup>55</sup> (verb): Origin: early 17th century: from *real* (late Middle English>from Anglo-Norman French, from late Latin *realis*, from Latin *res* 'thing') on the pattern of French *réaliser*

The primary meaning of *realise* is “to begin to understand something,” which contrasts with its Spanish lookalike, *realizar*, whose main sense is that of “carry out.” The defining traits of this verb are presented in the figure below:



<sup>55</sup> This English verb and its similar Spanish counterpart *realizar* might sometimes have similar uses. However, the main meanings of these terms are notably different. As shown by the Longman online dictionary of contemporary English, the primary meaning of *realize* is “to know and understand something, or suddenly begin to understand it” while the RAE online dictionary in its entry for *realizar* indicates that this verb’s chief meaning is that of “carry out.” Therefore, the semantic divergence between these items is high.

These verbs are partially deceptive since they share some uses; the following translations show the features they share as well as the differences between them:

(EN) REALIZE = (SP) DARSE CUENTA, HACER REALIDAD; SACAR/LIQUIDAR

(SP) REALIZAR = (EN) TO CARRY OUT; TO MAKE IT REAL

In the analysis of this verb, the two different spelling variations with *-s* or with *-z* (*realise* and *realize*) have been examined. I have also included a non-standard spelling which appears in learner language (*realice*) on several occasions. The American<sup>56</sup> spelling *realize* appears to be preferred (123 tokens) by Spanish learners of English to the more conservative British spelling, *realise* with 65 occurrences. There are a total of 12 examples of *realice*.

The data show the students' general tendency to make word for word translations of Spanish expressions (e.g. *to realise works*; *to realise practice in a company*; *to realise like a person*). Thus, they think of the Spanish verb *realizar*; that is, they render it into English *realize*. The problem is that these words are not fully equivalent. Examples from 283 to 286 show some of the mistakes found in both corpora.

- ✱ (283) ...interesantI think that an artist have to *realize* her compositions, music...and in this Academy the artists new have everything made. (SULEC-WP-IL- DOCUMENT 214).
- ✱ (284) The rest of time is used to *realize* works that almost ever have relation to militar aspects, like, for example, to make photocopies, and that could be *realice* by persons who does not be integrated in the army. [ ... ] They say that is not just that military service has a duration of nine months, while they must *realize* their service during thirteen months.< ICLE-SP-UCM-0010.4>
- ✱ (285) Most of the students that have studied in a professional education institute has *realized* practice in a company. (SULEC-SP-AL-DOCUMENT 19)
- ✱ (286) Soldiers may *realize* projects on diff. matters and also put them into effect into the barracks. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0006.2>

As for the British spelling of this verb, sixty-five cases of the word *realise* (with *-s*) have been attested in both corpora. The fact that they use this other spelling does not influence the results. They have the similar mistakes to those with the *-z*- spelling, as shown in the following examples.

<sup>56</sup> Traditionally, the *-ize* spelling was considered to be a defining feature of American English. According to Oxford rules (<http://oxforddictionaries.com/words/ize-ise-or-yse>), some verbs such as *realise*, *finalise* or *organise* can also end in *-ize* in British English.



- ✖ (287) The solution should be a change in the mentalities. But to *realise* this change people should dare going out of the law because searching to find a compromise between to extreme point of view is just impossible. (SULEC-WP-AL- DOCUMENT 738)
- ✖ (288) The more important lesson is the respect for the other people and we have to give the oportunity to everyone to *realise* like person (individually person) and we musn't to do of the society of sheeps where all the people have to do the same and think the same. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 1194)
- ✖ (289) Some universities like sciences ones *realise* practices for students, but in case of Facults of Arts this situation is very different. Because in them, none practice is taken. Some universities like sciences ones *realise* practices for students, but in case of Facults of Arts this situation is very different. Because in them, none practice is taken. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0053.3>

An interesting finding is that some learners do not regard *realize* and *realise* as two possible spellings of the same word, but as two different words which have different uses and syntactic distributions (*students have realized that...*, *realise practices*).

✓/✖ (290) For some reason or other, the students have *realized* that going to University is something that has been seen in lots of different ways along the years. To go to university 50 years ago, it was considered something very special, for those people that could pay an university degree. These people belonged to an upper social class. [...] Some universities like sciences ones *realise* practices for students, but in case of Facults of Arts this situation is very different. Because in them, none practice is taken. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0053.3>

As aforesaid, a third spelling of this word, that of *realice*, has been found. Examples of this type show the same problems as examples with the other two spellings. Therefore, there are obvious cases of linguistic interference, where the word is used in the sense of “to carry out” (291).

- ✖ (291) students that finish a licenciature don't have a good preparation to *realice* the work for they were preparated by universitys [...]Of course that without theoretical basement a student cannot *realice* a job, but in many times, this theoretical knowles can be learned by the practical lessons, (SULEC-SP-IL-DOCUMENT 677)

In spite of the fact that I have focused on the mistakes, there are many cases which show the word's correct meaning and use. As a matter of fact, a high proportion of the sample sentences containing this verb are correct (they convey the idea of “grasp or understand sth.”).

- ✓ (292) But, fortunately, there was a moment in our history where women began to *realise* that they could manage and handle with situations and

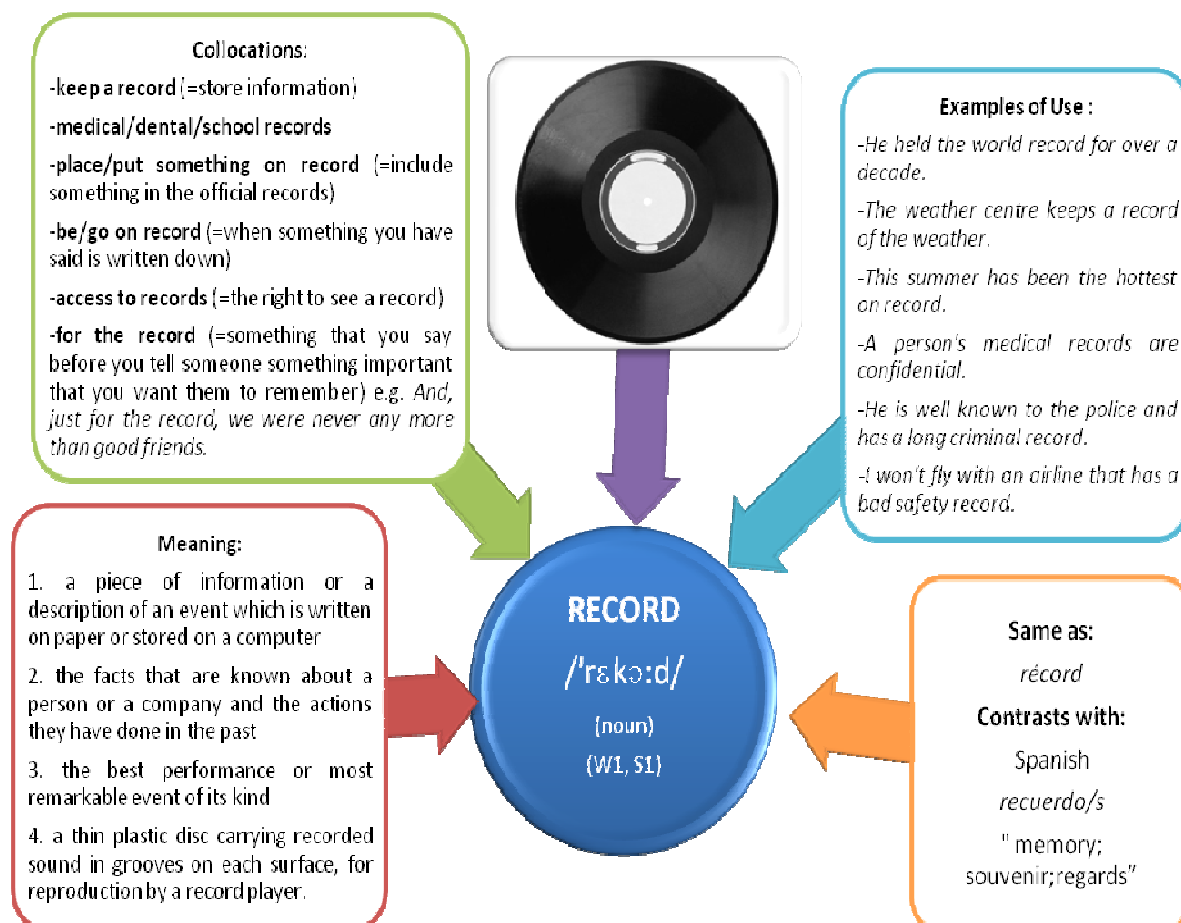
functions that took place out of the kitchen, which was then their territory.  
<ICLE-SP-UCM-0010.5>

- ✓ (293) In fact, as a non-smoker I have *realiced* that new law is working yet.  
(SULEC-SP-IL-DOCUMENT 1262)
- ✓ (294) At the beginning of the play, we can *realize* that he has no morals at all. He refers to his gold and money as if they were saints. He praises his fortunes. He is comparing religion with riches. <ICLE-SP-ALC-0001.1>

Despite the spelling variability (e.g. *realise*, *realize*, *realice*), learners show that they are familiar with the meaning of this English verb. In fact, the level of error is 8,5 every 100 word uses, which is not really high.

► **RECORD** (noun): Origin: Middle English: from Old French *record* 'remembrance', from *recorder* 'bring to remembrance', from Latin *recordari* 'remember', based on *cor*, *cord*- 'heart'. The noun was earliest used in law to denote the fact of being written down as evidence.

Again *record* and *récord* are partial false friends. Both words mean “the best achievement so far in a particular activity, especially in sport.”



It seems useful to offer some English-Spanish/ Spanish-English translations of these terms in order to see the semantic similarities and differences more clearly.

(EN) RECORD = (SP) HISTORIAL; ANTECEDENTES; DISCO; RÉCORD

(SP) RÉCORD = (EN) RECORD (as in *world record*)

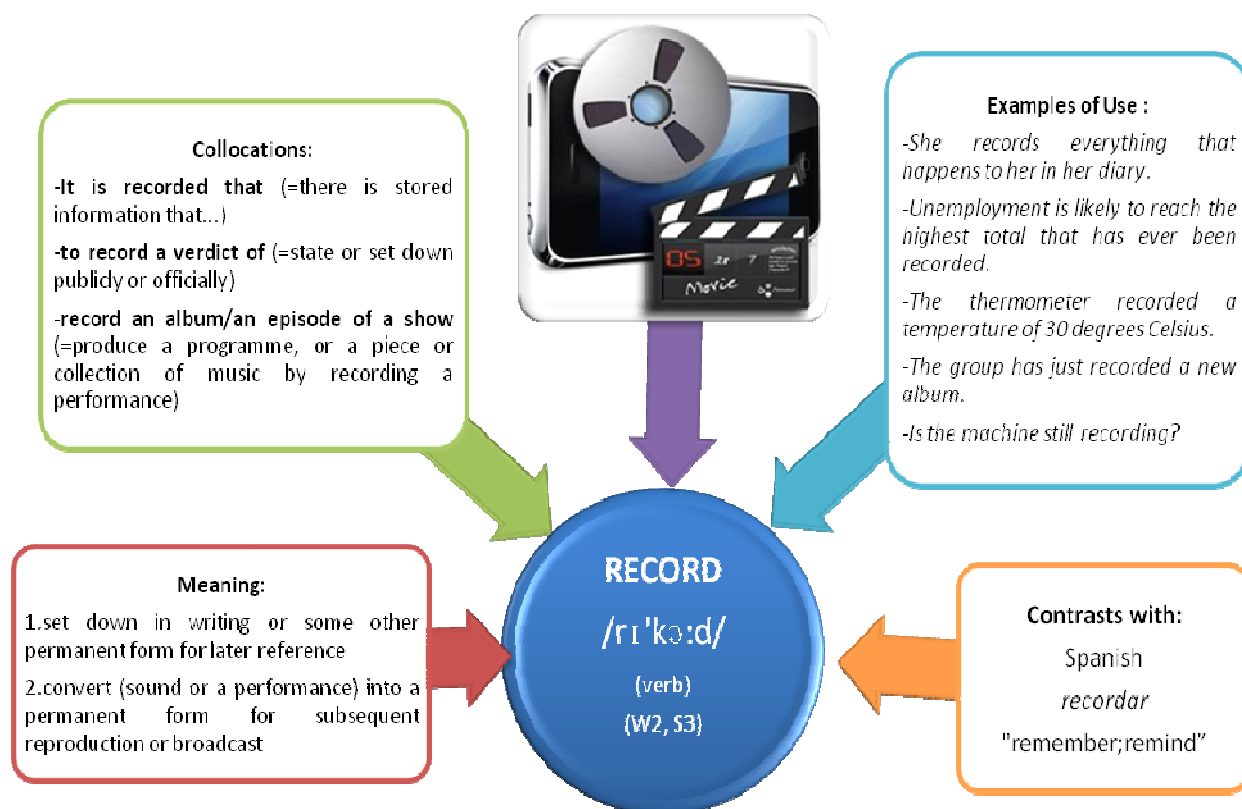
Apart from *récord*, the Spanish word *recuerdo* (meaning “souvenir or regards”) which bears conspicuous formal similarities with English *record* may add some sort of difficulty. Spanish learners might have used the English word *record* in the sense of “souvenir, present” under the influence of Spanish *recuerdo*. However, no such effects were observed in the corpora.

The word *record* displays its most frequent meanings in learner language; thus, students use it to talk about music (“musical record”) and about the “world record” awards. Although there are some linguistic mistakes surrounding this noun, the meaning assigned to the focus term is the correct one.

- ✓ (295) They believe that “Operación Trinifo” is bad for them, because the youn singers sell a lot of *records* in a little time (SULEC-WL-IL-DOCUMENT 179)
- ✓ (296) Compact Disk join usefulness and "dreams;" to condense the typical 12'7 inches vinilium *record* in a handable 2'5 inches plastic one, but with more utilities than anyone could have thought thirty years before <ICLE-SP-UCM-0009.3>
- ✓ (297) The most incredible one: "Jesulin de Ubrique" has made a *record* and he is doing seven live concerts around Spain. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0025.7>
- ✓ (298) Even television shows are trying to beat Guinness *records* of people who have stopped smkoking thanks to them. (SULEC-WL-AL-DOCUMENT 474)

► **RECORD** (verb): Origin: Middle English: from Old French *record* 'remembrance', from *recorder* 'bring to remembrance', from Latin *recordari* 'remember.' The verb originally meant ‘narrate orally or in writing’, also ‘repeat so as to commit to memory’

English *record* and Spanish *recordar* are two verbs with similar forms and different meanings.



The relationship of these two verbs is that of a total false friend between English and Spanish. They have their own independent semantic traits, as shown in the translations provided:

(EN) RECORD = (SP) GRABAR, ANOTAR, DAR TESTIMONIO, REGISTRAR

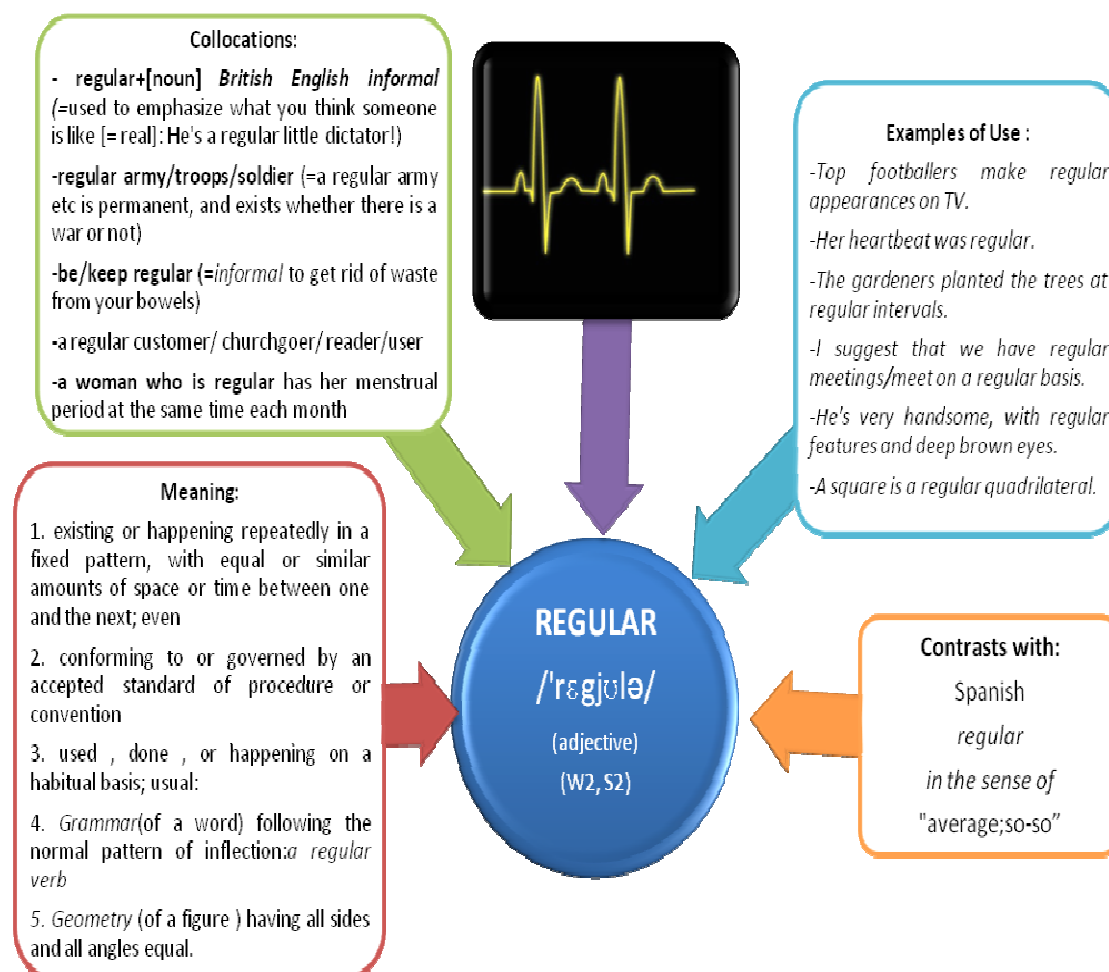
(SP) RECORDAR = (EN) REMEMBER, REMIND

The verb *record* is correctly used by learners, as can be seen from data in both SULEC and ICLE.

- ✓ (299) The prize is that three of them can *record* a CD, and one of them go to Eurovision, to represent Spain. (SULEC-WL-IL-DOCUMENT 171)
- ✓ (300) Four big circles are *recorded* in this period: the York circle, the Wakefiel circle, the Chester circle and the Coventry one. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0020.1>

► **REGULAR** (adjective): Origin: late Middle English: from Old French *reguler*, from Latin *regularis*, from *regula* 'rule'

The interlingual homographs *regular* and *regular* in English and Spanish respectively, are partially deceptive terms which display some shared senses.



The translations of these adjectives show the semantic overlap between both adjectives:

(EN) REGULAR = (SP) HABITUAL; PROFESIONAL (soldado), VERDADERO (énfasis)

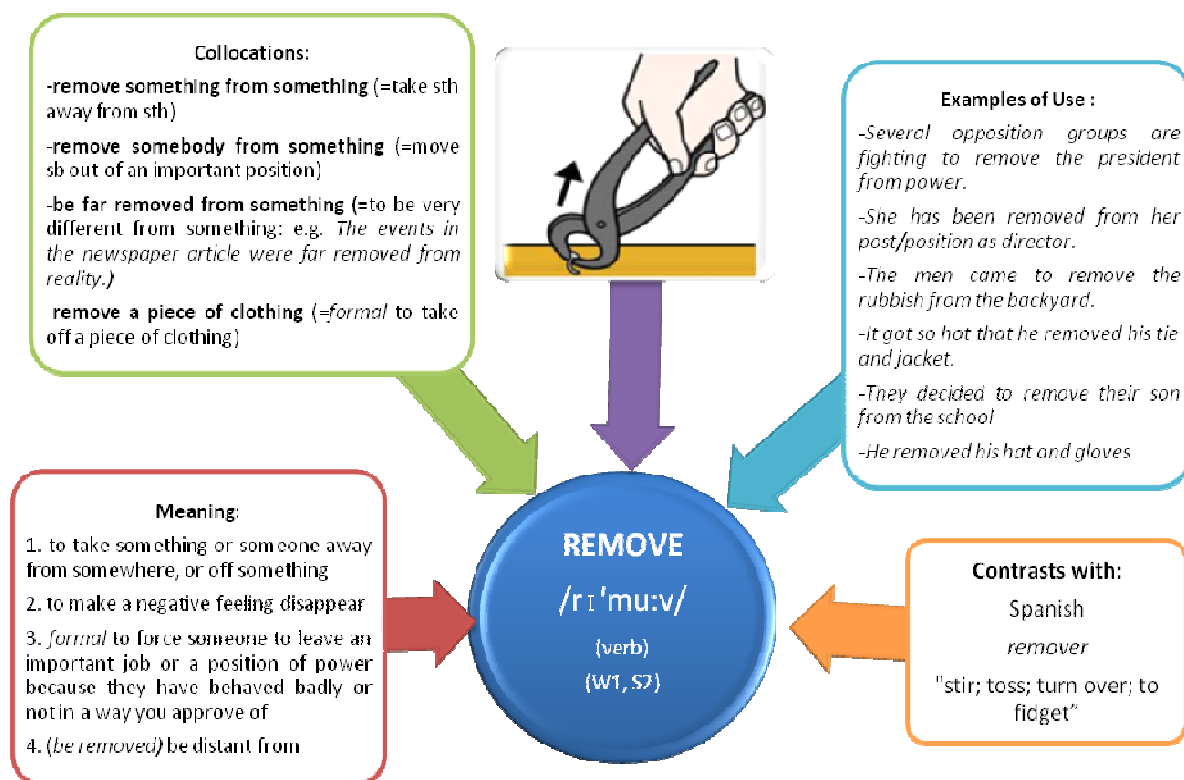
(SP) REGULAR = (EN) SO-SO; REGULAR

The adjective **regular** is appropriately used in its meaning of “usual, ordinary.” So no problems have been detected with regard to this adjective.

- ✓ (301) I think that the marriage of persons of the same sex are allowed because they are person, they aren't monsters and ugly animal. They are **regular** citizen that pay their tributes thus they should be the same derechos that the other citizen of a society. (SULEC-WL-IL-DOCUMENT 1192)
- ✓ (302) **Regular** television broadcasting began in the United States in 1941, but most other countries, apart from Great Britain, were ready to begin services until the 1950. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0005.5>
- ✓ (303) Firstly, we can see how J. Donne try to reproduce the sound of the friction of the spheres giving a **regular** rhyme to his verses <ICLE-SP-ALC-0009.1>

► **REMOVE** (verb): Origin: Middle English (as a verb): from the Old French stem *remov-*, from Latin *removere*, from *re-* 'back' + *movere* 'to move.'

Following the RAE dictionary and other Spanish dictionaries, English **remove** and Spanish *remover* share the sense of “removing somebody from a particular job” (e.g. *Han removido a todos los empleados que no cumplían su horario*<sup>57</sup>).



The meanings of these verbs are made obvious through their corresponding translations here:

(EN) REMOVE = (SP) QUITAR; ELIMINAR (obstacle)

(SP) REMOVER = (EN) STIR (soup); TO TURN OVER (earth)

This verb has been frequently included in lists of false friends between Spanish and English (Álvarez, 1997:139; Walsh, 2005:41) since it is almost identical to the Spanish verb *remover* “stir.” However, the English sense is kept in learner language, as illustrated in 304-307.

- ✓ (304) If somebody thinks that way, the only thing that person has to do is to **remove** the conformism from its mind and to allow dreams flow free into it. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0002.3>

<sup>57</sup> Although this instance of Spanish *remover* does not sound natural in Iberian Spanish, it is accepted as standard Spanish. In fact, this example was taken from the *Diccionario de la Lengua Española*. 2001. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe.

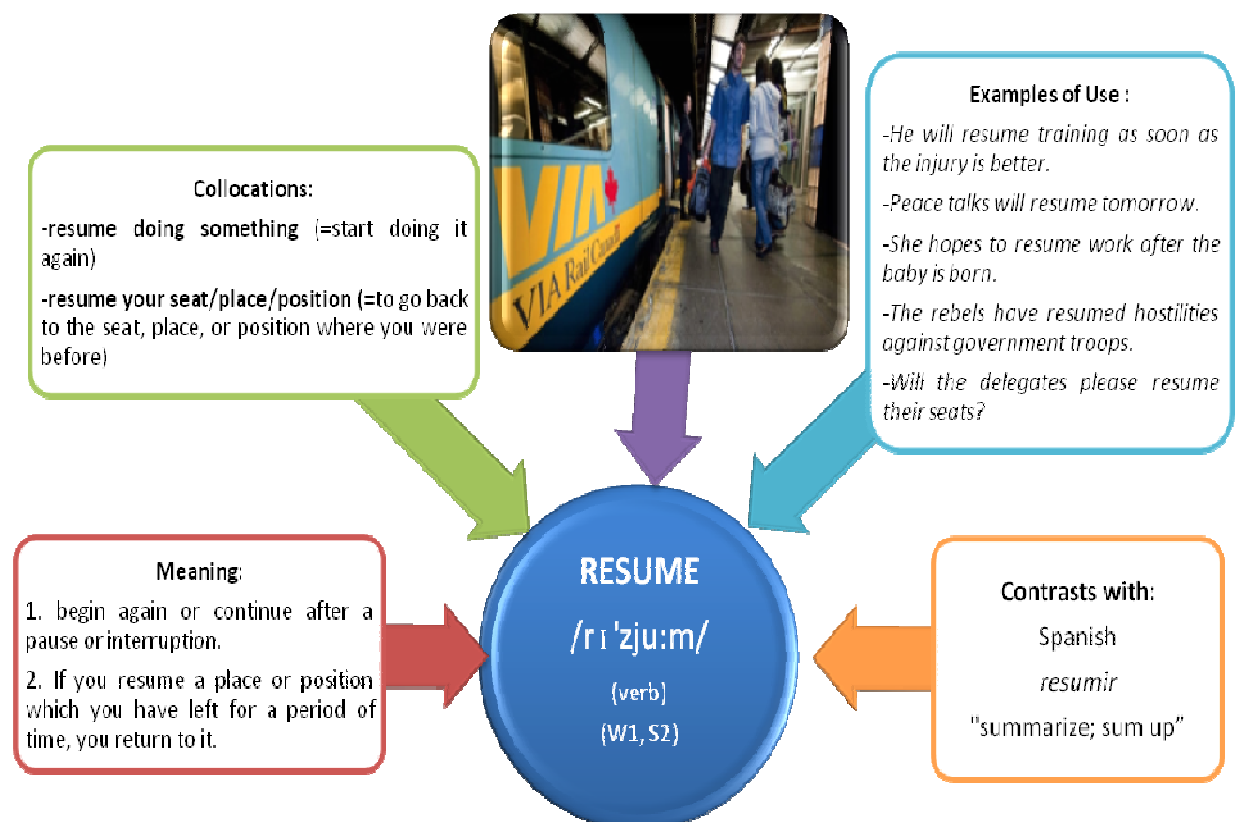
- ✓ (305) I think that all public places should forbid smoke if those places haven't a system to *remove* the polluted air. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 280)
- ✓ (306) Noriega was a dictator who should be *removed* from office by any means <ICLE-SP-UCM-0009.4>
- ✓ (307) language is extremely sexist. Words used to call a woman such as 'baby', 'doll', 'honey', etc are not applied to men. [...], words which initially have [...] sexual allusions. Some of them are tried to be *removed* from language but it is slow and difficult. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0008.9>

There is only one example where *remove* is used to express the idea of “go into a matter over and over again; stir it up.” This constitutes a clear case of semantic transfer from the Spanish similar verb *remover*, which means exactly “to stir sth.”

- ✗ (308) For the last years, the marriage of persons of the same sex has been an issue frequently *removed* xx here in Spain (SULEC-WL-IL-DOCUMENT DOCUMENT 1215)

► **RESUME** (verb): Origin: late Middle English: from Old French *resumer* or Latin *resumere*, from *re-* 'back' + *sumere* 'take'

*Resume* and *resumir* do not have the same meaning in English and Spanish, despite their formal similarities.



The translations in the two languages clearly illustrate the differences between these words.

(EN) RESUME = (SP) REANUDAR

(SP) RESUMIR = (EN) TO SUM UP

There are six examples of this word: three in ICLE and three in SULEC. This lexical is used to mean “summarise,” as is evident from the phrase *\*to resume* or *\*in resume*. This made-up use of **resume** represents a clear case of crosslinguistic influence (from the Spanish expression *para resumir, en resumen*).

- × (309) To **resume**, if everybody could do it, why we cannot? (SULEC-WP-AL-DOCUMENT 1213)
- × (310) The play is, in **resume**, a critique of the absurdity of all forms and conventions. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0016.8>

Semantic transfer is also present in 311 and 312. In these sentences, Spanish learners use the verb **resume** to convey the idea that they are summarising the main ideas of a novel.

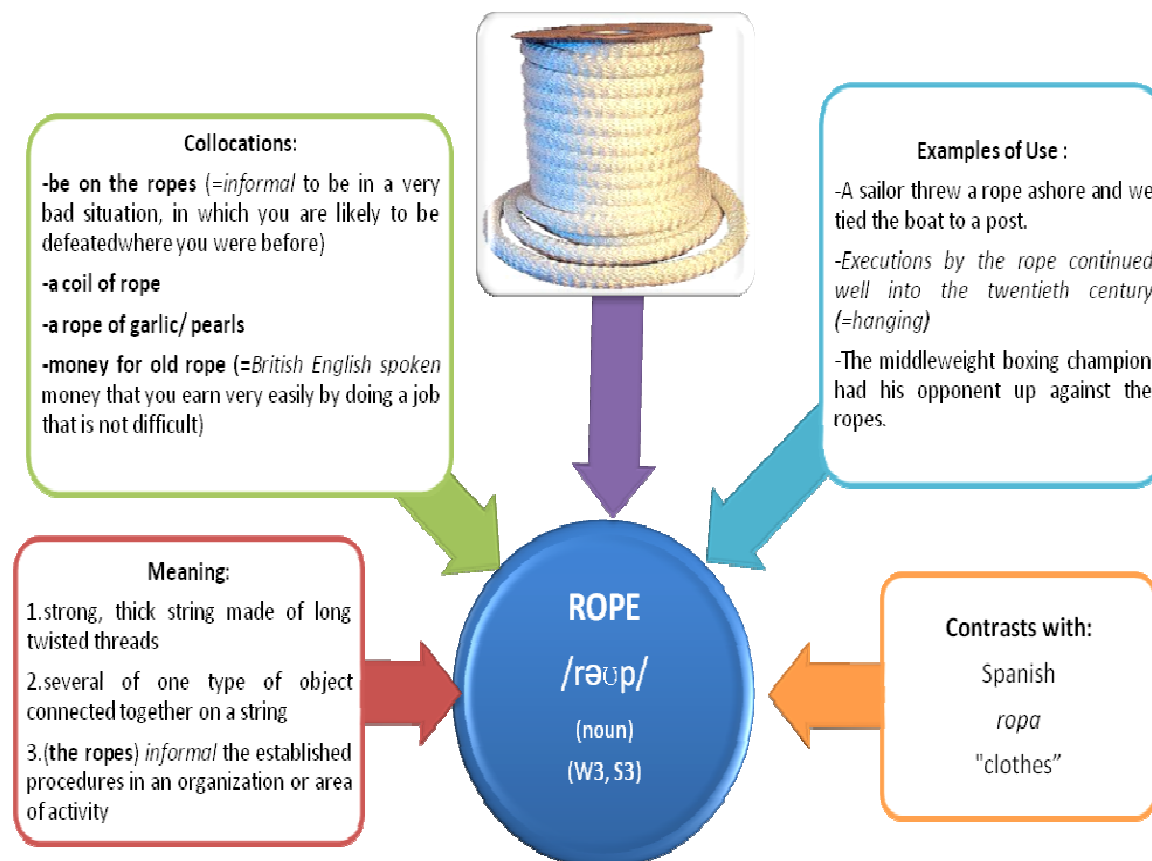
- × (311) This essay deals with the idea of explaining the sentence written by Orwell in his book *Animal Farm*. It says: "All men are equal: but some are more equal than others". [ ... ] with this quotation he **resumes** the principal ideas of his novel. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0028.3>
- × (312) with this quotation he **resumes** the principal ideas of his novel. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0028.3>

In spite of students’ repeated use of the English term in the Spanish way, the English verb **resume** has nothing to do with the Spanish verb *resumir*. The English item means “to start again,” as in *The meeting will resume after lunch*; and some of its most typical collocations are *to resume a journey*, *to resume one's seat*, *to resume one's work*. One of the main conclusions that we can draw from these examples is that advanced SSEFL are not aware of the semantic differences between Spanish *resumir* and English **resume**.

► **ROPE** (noun): Origin: Old English *rāp*, of Germanic origin; related to Dutch *reep* and German *Reif*.



English **rope** and Spanish *ropa* are coincidental false friends whose formal resemblance is a matter of chance. Consequently, their semantic spaces are far from each other. They are total false friends denoting two very different things.



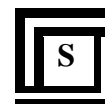
The translations of these nouns illustrate the semantic divergence between **rope** and *ropa* in a clear way:

(EN) ROPE = (SP) CUERDA

(SP) ROPA = (EN) CLOTHES

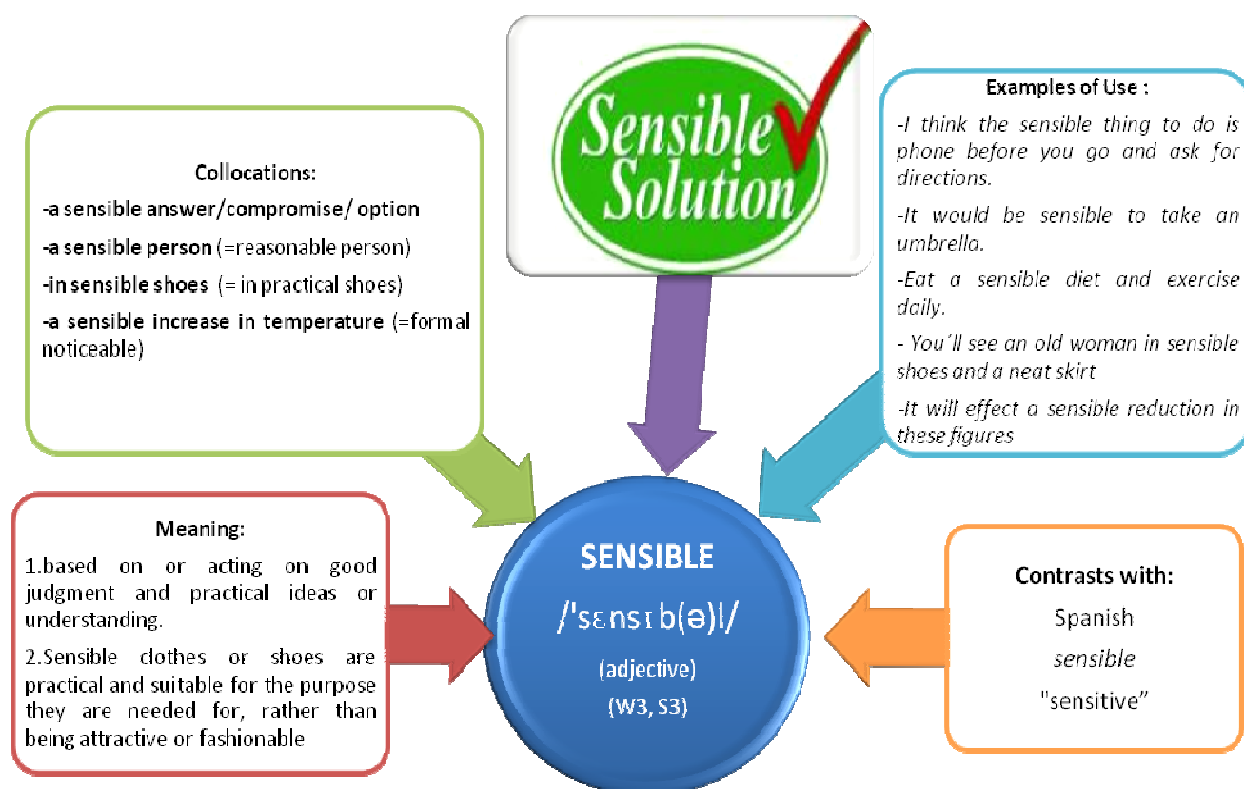
The noun **rope** is not frequently used by students in the corpora analysed. There is only one single instance of this noun and it occurs in ICLE. **Rope** is rightly used in the sense of “thick string,” so no problems are attested with regard to this word.

- ✓ (313) If the parents have not sufficient money for buying one of those remote-controlled cars that run, jump, revolve, simply by the minimum effort of pressing a button, the boy will get a box made by cardboard, a piece of **rope** and plastiline, and will invent a lorry which will be marvellous for him, since it has came out from his head. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0023.5>



► **SENSIBLE**<sup>58</sup> (adjective): Origin: late Middle English (also in the sense 'perceptible by the senses'): from Old French, or from Latin *sensibilis*, from *sensus* 'faculty of feeling.'

English *sensible* and Spanish *sensible* are total false friends. In spite of being orthographically identical, these words do not have any meaning in common.



The semantic differences between these two adjectives can be seen in their translations below:

(EN) SENSIBLE = (SP) SENSATO

(SP) SENSIBLE = (EN) SENSITIVE

<sup>58</sup> **NOTE:** A **sensible** person is reasonable and shows good judgement. A **sensitive** person is easily upset, or understands other people's feelings when they are upset.

*Sensible* and the adjective *reasonable/judicious* are synonyms in English. Students seem to be familiar with it, as the following example shows:

- ✓ (314) Smoking is a vice, I understand How difficult to give up tabaco it is. For many people smoking is nearly compulsory, but some of them are *sensible* people, and they try don't smoke at hospitals, inside coatchs, metro, buses, when they are by children, bbys or pregnan women. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 28)

As aforesaid, *sensible* is identical to the Spanish adjective *sensible* “emotionally responsive.” The conspicuous coincidences in spelling and in word class (both are adjectives) leads students to use the English term *sensible* with the Spanish sense.

- ✗ (315) The dictatorial period imposed by Franco is not very far for them; we must be *sensible* and try to be in their feet, they borned and they also grew in these social and cultural conditions so it is not their fault to disagree with this kind of sentimental relationships and the behaviour which it implies. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 249)

Spanish *sensible* is equivalent to English *sensitive*. Confusion increases when this last adjective comes into play. In fact, it is common for students to use *sensible* (Spanish *sensato*) when they mean *sensitive*, as shown below.

- ✗ (316) Uncultivated people that are more *sensible* and accessible to external influences;....<ICLE-SP-UCM-0007.4>

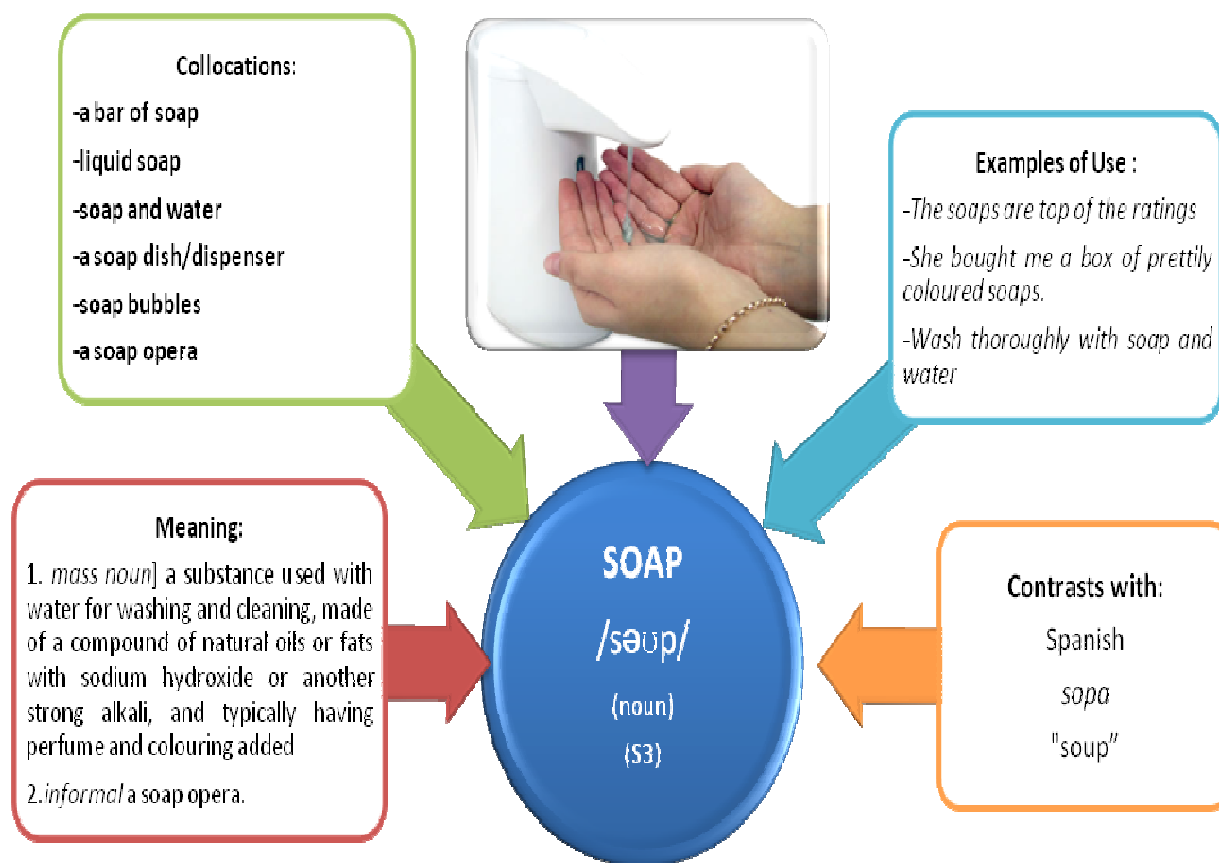
Thus, the English adjective *sensible* poses serious problems for students. Spanish learners of English wrongly assume that this English term is the translation equivalent of Spanish *sensible*, and they use it as such. In fact, more than half of the examples of *sensible* show the influence of the Spanish word *sensible*.

► **SOAP** (noun):<sup>59</sup> Origin: Old English *sāpe*, of West Germanic origin; related to Dutch *zeep* and German *Seife*.

English *soap* and Spanish *sopa* are total false friends. Their meanings are completely different.

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<sup>59</sup> This noun only occurs in the informal phrase “soap opera.” We cannot draw conclusions on other uses of the noun on its own since no data are recorded from it in other contexts.



The translations proposed below show the different realities expressed by these two nouns:

(EN) SOAP= (SP) JABÓN

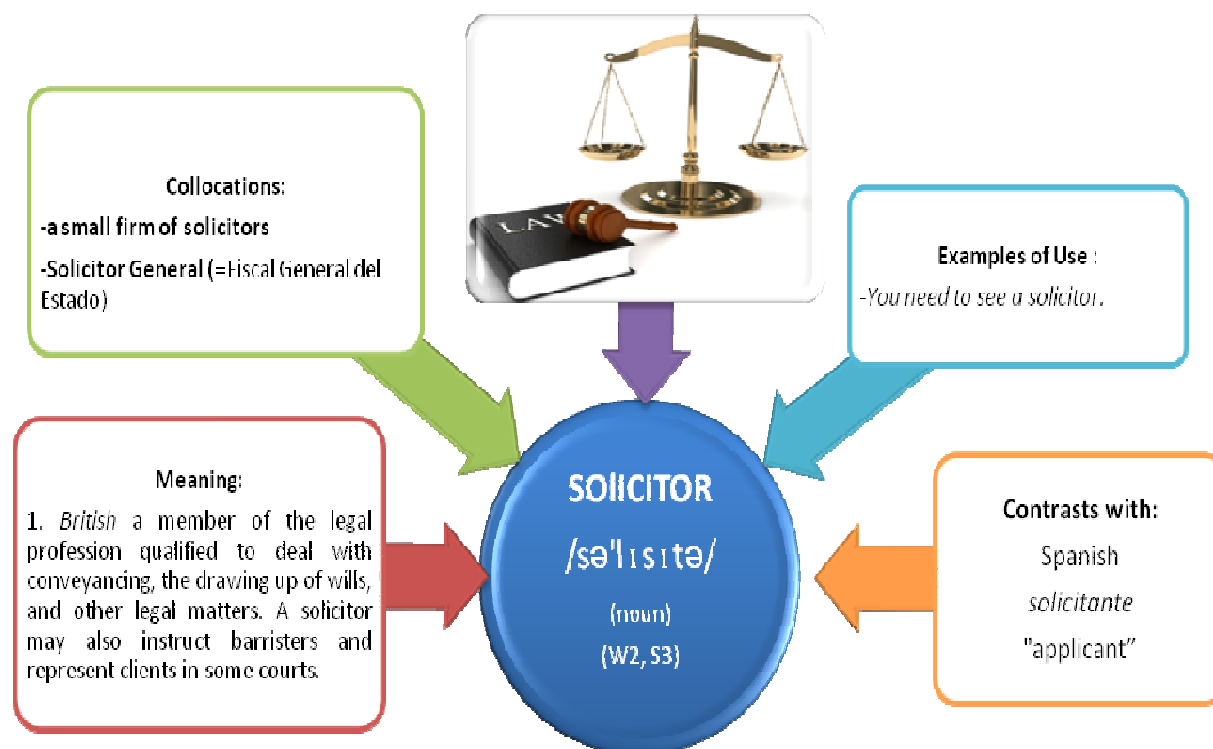
(SP) SOPA = (EN) SOUP

Spanish students use this lexical item in the informal compound “soap opera” in the nine examples recorded in learners’ writings. For this reason, the use of this noun is said to be correct. The figures in the final chart make reference to this use in this particular phrase; there are not any other uses of this noun in other contexts.

- ✓ (317) People spend (or perhaps waste) their time paying attention to films, *soap* operas, documentals, commercials and so on. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0009.2>
- ✓ (318) Besides, if we analyze the remaining programs not corrupted, (by advertising, I mean), we see that television only offers which is easy to "sell": *soap* operas (mainly for female sector), sports (for male sector), non-educative cartoons (for infantile sector), violent movies and stupid quiz shows "apt" to all of them. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0049.4>

► **SOLICITOR** (noun): Origin: late Middle English (denoting an agent or deputy): from Old French *solliciteur*, from Latin *sollicitare* 'agitate', from *sollicitus* 'anxious', from *sollus* 'entire' + *citus* (past participle of *ciere* 'set in motion')

**Solicitor** and *solicitante* are words whose meanings have nothing to do with each other.



They are full false friends and the meaning differences are made evident in the translations provided:

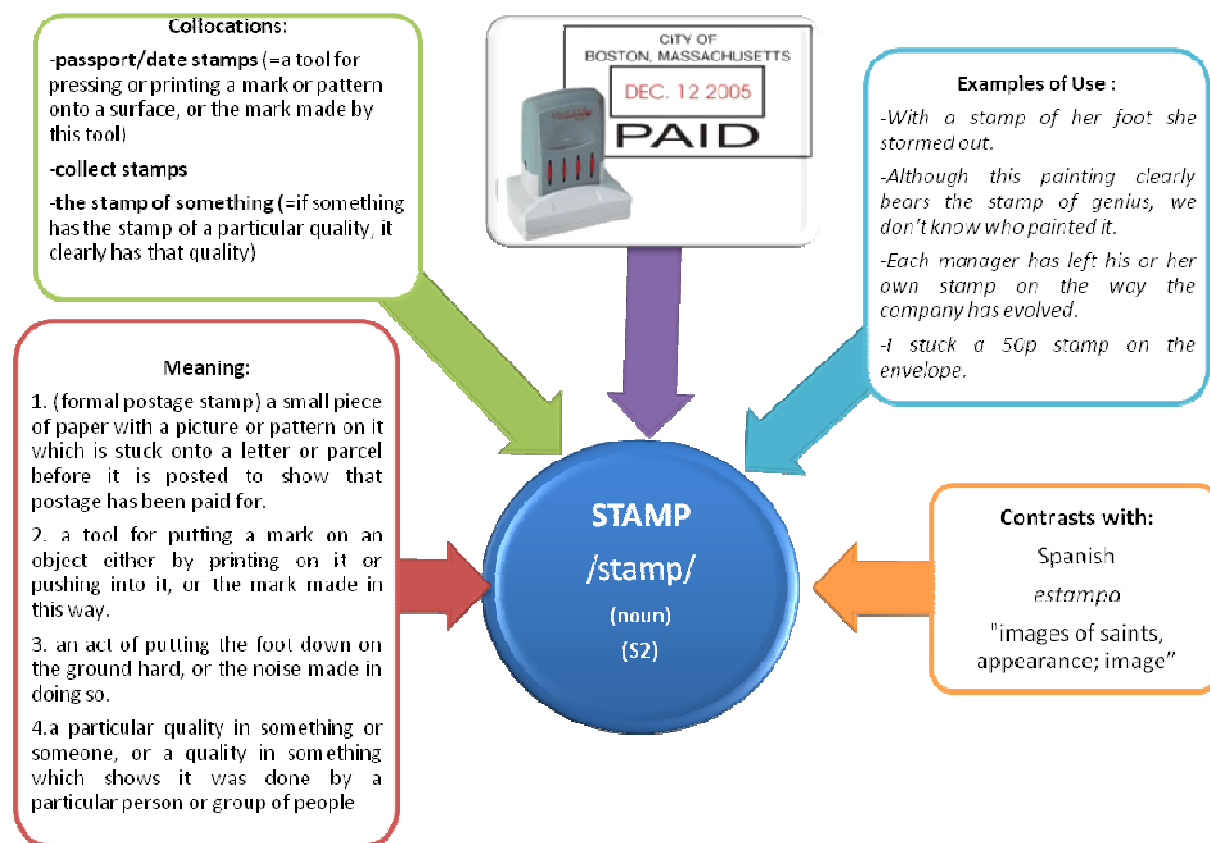
(EN) SOLICITOR= (SP) ABOGADO; FISCAL

(SP) SOLICITANTE= (EN) APPLICANT

No data of this noun are registered in SULEC or in ICLE. Therefore, conclusions on the productive use of this noun cannot be drawn due to the absence of data. However, the second part of this study will examine how Spanish learners interpret this noun when they come across it in a text (see chapter 4, sections 4.6.1 and 4.6.2., pp. 371- 372, 388). Do they think that a *solicitor* is any applicant or do they know that *solicitor* refers to a type of lawyer? The answer to this question will be found in the reading comprehension task of the second study, designed to inquire into the learners' comprehension and understanding of false friends.

► **STAMP** (noun): Origin: Middle English (in the sense ‘crush to a powder’): of Germanic origin; related to German *stampfen* ‘stamp with the foot’; reinforced by Old French *estamper* ‘to stamp.’

The formal similarity between *stamp* and *estampa* is also coincidental. The origins of these words do not go back to the same roots; as a consequence, the core meanings of these two words have nothing to do.



The translations below illustrate the meanings of these words:

(EN) STAMP = (SP) SELLO; CUPÓN

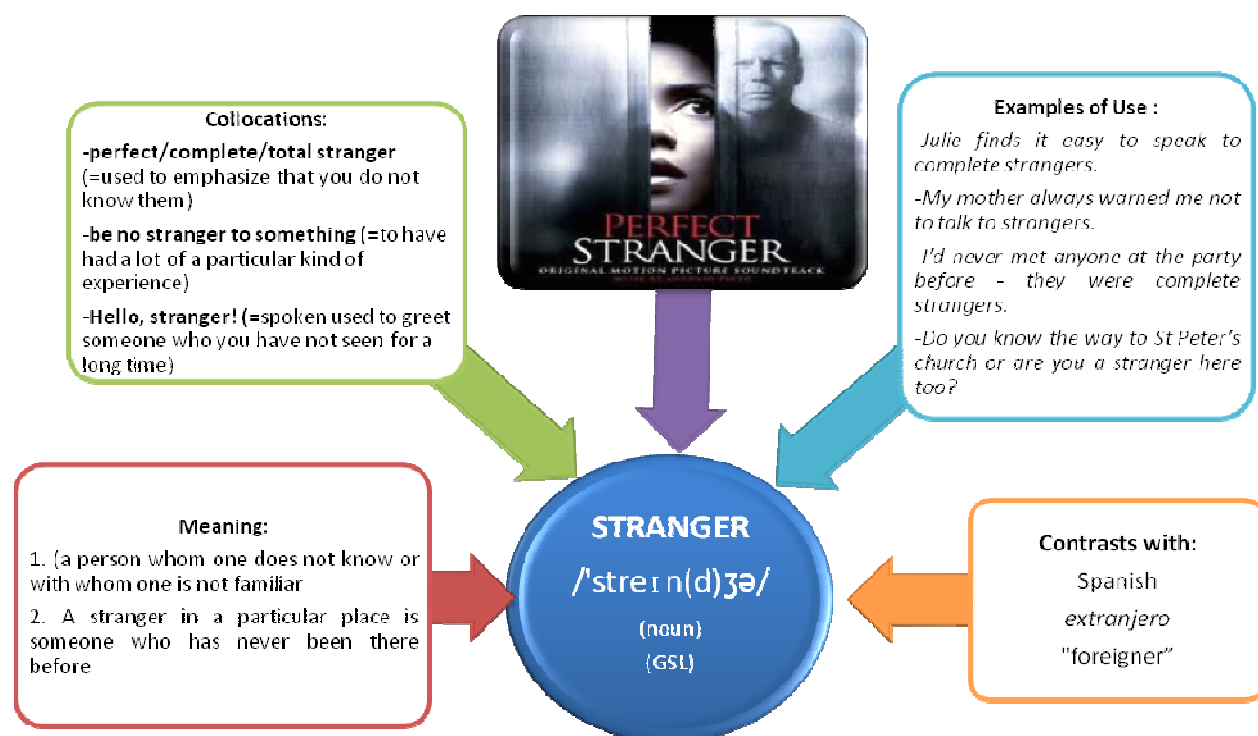
(SP) ESTAMPA = (EN) IMAGE; APPEARANCE

There are not any recorded instances of the use of this noun in the learners' written productions. So no definite conclusions can be drawn with regard to this noun. My predictions are that this noun is correctly used when learners want to refer to any postage stamp. However, it might be the case that when learners need to convey the idea of appearance (Spanish *ser la estampa de alguien* "to be the spitting image of someone") or they need to refer to prints of saints which are called "estampas" in

Spanish, they could resort to the word *stamp* as a communicative strategy to make up for their lack of vocabulary. However, my data do not provide us with evidence to confirm this hypothesis.

► **STRANGER** (noun):<sup>60</sup> Origin: late Middle English: shortening of Old French *estrangier*, from Latin *extraneus*

*Stranger* is analysed in its use as a noun, not in its adjectival function (comparative form of *strange*). I pay attention to the nominal form since problems of the false friend type may be here in operation. *Stranger* is a word which denotes a person you do not know, e.g. *Children must not talked to strangers*. This contrasts with the Spanish similar noun *extranjero*.



The translations of these two nouns may be of help to grasp the semantic differences in these two lexical items:

(EN) STRANGER = (SP) DESCONOCIDO, FORASTERO

(SP) EXTRANJERO = (EN) FOREIGNER

<sup>60</sup> **Stranger** cannot be used to mean “a person from another country,” that is, a **foreigner** or, more politely, a person **from abroad/overseas**.

Nevertheless, the word *stranger* seems to denote a “person who comes from a different country” in example 319 from SULEC. This might be regarded as an example of language transfer. Therefore, the Spanish word *extranjero* has an influence on the meaning of *stranger*.

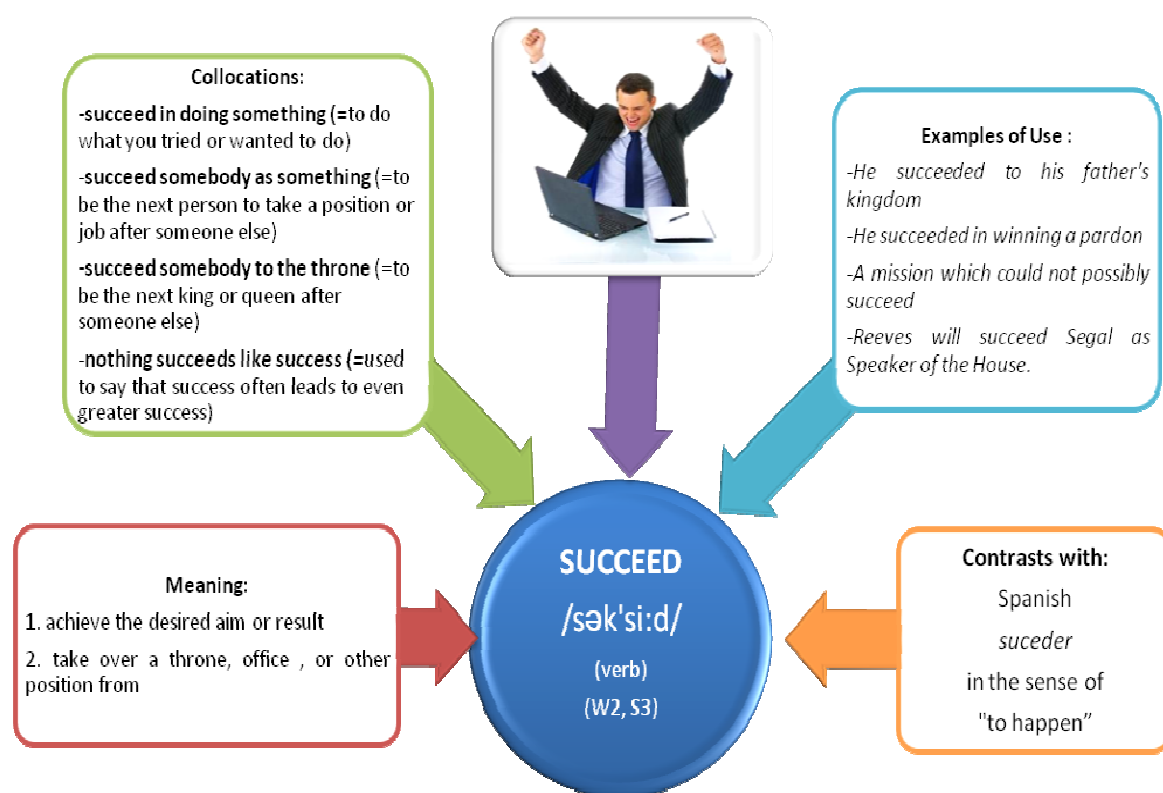
- ✱ (319) As I've xx been approaching different cultures and being familiar with them (only for the pleasure or amusement it provokes me to pretend I'm a *stranger* in my own country). (SULEC-WP-IL- DOCUMENT 862)

However, the truth value of English *stranger* occurs in an example from ICLE. In this example, the word *stranger* is correctly used to refer to “an unknown person.”

- ✓ (320) I don't like compliments of *strangers*, I'm not an object, or a car or a dog that needs to be evaluated and besides compliments always show respect or admiration and in "Hey babe nice ass" there is no respect at all. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0005.2>

► **SUCCEED** (verb): Origin: late Middle English: from Old French *succeder* or Latin *succedere* 'come close after', from *sub-* 'close to' + *cedere* 'go'

English *succeed* and Spanish *suceder* are partial false friends.



The semantic similarities and differences between these lexical items are displayed below through their corresponding translations:



(EN) SUCCEED = (SP) TENER ÉXITO; TRIUNFAR; SUCEDER

(SP) SUCEDER = (EN) TO HAPPEN; SUCEED (in a position)

Six examples of *succeed* and its inflected variants were identified. None of them shows problems in the use of this word. Here are two examples, one from ICLE and the other from SULEC.

- ✓ (321) For example, people from Cuba try to go to The United States by boat, and the same happens to people from Morocco trying to go to Spain by boat. Some of them die; others are taken back to their countries, and those who have better luck, *succeed* in their purpose. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0004.2>
- ✓ (322) [ ... ] to conclude, it must be added that although some university degrees are mostly theoretical, they do not prevent one from getting on in life; after all there is no better practice than the real outside world which will finally give everyone the sufficient experience so as to *succeed* in what they wish. (SULEC-WP-AL-DOCUMENT 139)

However, the lack of a higher number of examples does not allow us to reach definitive conclusions about this word.

► **SUCCESS** (noun): Origin: mid 16th century: from Latin *successus*, from the verb *succedere* 'come close after.'

English *success* and Spanish *suceso* are total false friends in essence.



The main point of contrast between these two nouns is provided by means of their respective translations:

(EN) SUCCESS = (SP) ÉXITO

(SP) SUCESO = (EN) HAPPENING; CRIME REPORTS

Corpus data suggest that the English noun *success* is influenced by its Spanish homograph and homophone *suceso* on some occasions. Example 323 below shows it. This example illustrates a different use of the English noun *success* which does not really exist in English. The learner makes use of this word in its plural form “successes” to mean “events/ happenings/circumstances,” which constitutes a clear example of transfer. This idea is stressed by the fact that this noun, commonly regarded as uncountable, occurs in the plural form.

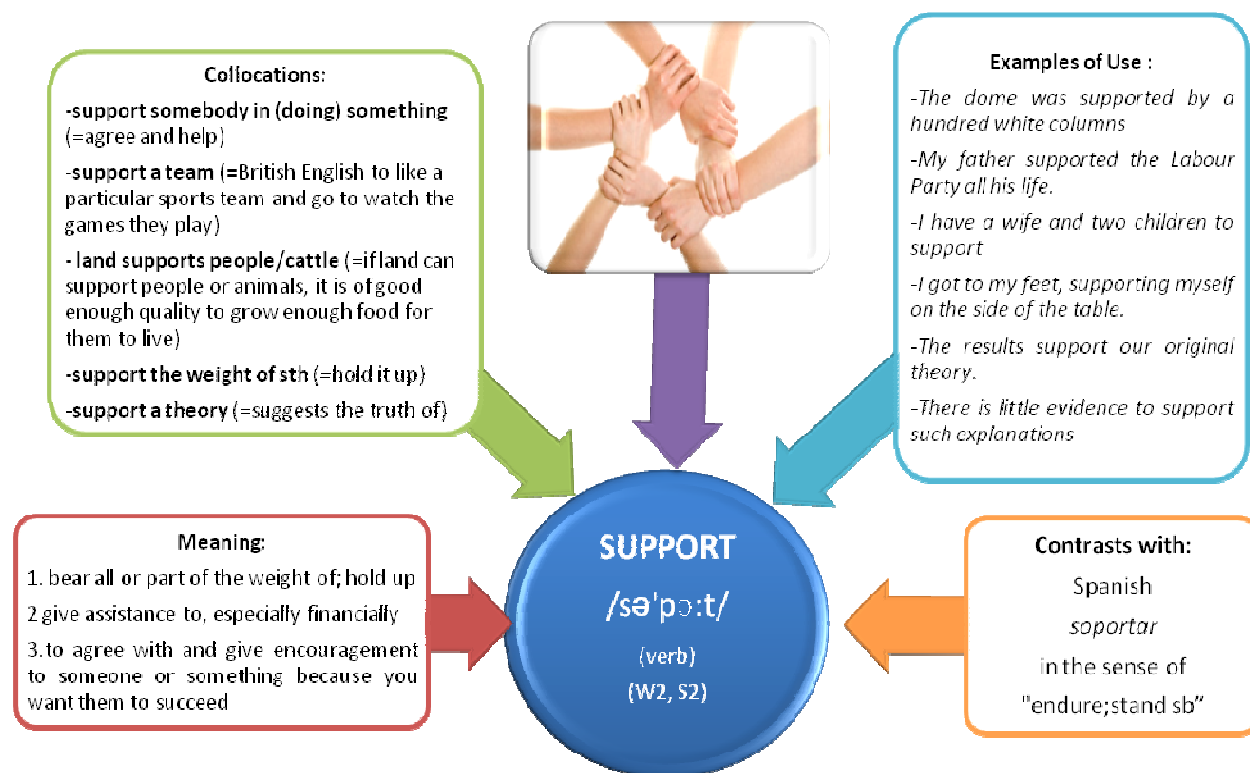
- ✱ (323) **Why do the machines exist and work but because a mad absent-minded scientist finds the way to improve our standard of living? Fortunately, this wise person has the wonderful attitude to create thanks to his or her dreamings and objectives, making a continuous mixture of real and imaginaries *successes* intermingled with every new results of the investigations. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0050.3>**

Yet, most instances of this noun show that, in general, students know what *success* refers to in English. They use it with the meaning of “accomplishment of something,” as well as in well-known word combinations, such as “great success,” “to become the key to success,” or “with success,” as illustrated by the following examples.

- ✓ (324) **They didn't get a great *success*. All the romantic poets Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron... wrote romantic tragedies, they took place in extravagant and distant places. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0014.8>**
- ✓ (325) **Money transformed society and became the key to *success* or proverty. (SULEC-WP-AL-DOCUMENT 235)**
- ✓ (326) **If you aren't prepared to face the problems you can have, if you aren't prepared to solve the difficulties, how can you be able to carry out a job with *success*? Your teachers won't be by your side, when you are working. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 751)**
- ✓ (327) **A united Europe is overall a project, whose *success* depends on the efforts of governments and citizens. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0014.2>**

► **SUPPORT** (verb): Origin: Middle English (originally in the sense 'tolerate'): from Old French *supporter*, from Latin *supportare*, from *sub-* 'from below' + *portare* 'carry.'

Broadly speaking, **support** and *soportar* are total false friends with no shared meanings.



The semantic differences between these two lexical items are displayed by means of their translations:

(EN) TO SUPPORT = (SP) APOYAR

(SP) SOPORTAR = (EN) TO BEAR; TO PUT UP WITH

Ninety-five occurrences of the verb **support** were found: fifty-three in SULEC and forty-two in ICLE. This verb is mainly used in the compositions dealing with the topic of smoking. Collocations, such as *don't support the dirty air* are persistent all throughout the corpora.

- ✱ (328) This is my opinion, I never smoked and I will never smoke, because I am a person that don't *support* the air dirty, the air popullity.( SULEC-WP-IL- DOCUMENT 15)

The verb phrase *don't support* is frequently used by learners, instead of the most suitable phrase *cannot stand*. The influence of the Spanish verb *soportar* is therefore felt in many cases. A total number of twenty-three examples of this nature are registered. Two of them are presented below.

- ✱ (329) **In my opinion, should be illegal smoking in public places because there are people that don't *support* the smoke of the cigattes, for example I know a person who don't *support* it , if he is with a smoking person and this person is smoking, she ask for him if he can stop of smoke and if this person say that not, she drop out of him. (SULEC-WP-IL- DOCUMENT 270)**
- ✱ (330) **The public places should be free of tabac, because in there should be free of tabac, because in there places could be childrens and other people that don't *support* the smoke. (SULEC-WP-IL- DOCUMENT 452)**

The verb *support* occurs in many texts with the meaning of “endure difficulties” or “bear high temperatures” (331 and 332, respectively)

- ✱ (331) **responsability causes depressions and nervous breakdowns due to the following problems: taxes, children, our jobs and the most modern of all the fear of loosing our jobs, too many difficulties to be *supported* by a person. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0029.3>**
- ✱ (332) **In other places such as New York, where it never have snowed in this way, last week there were people incomunicated and they were *supporting* temperatures of fifteen degrees bellow zero. The situation will continue next days and in some villages the food is being distributed by helicopter. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0052.4>**

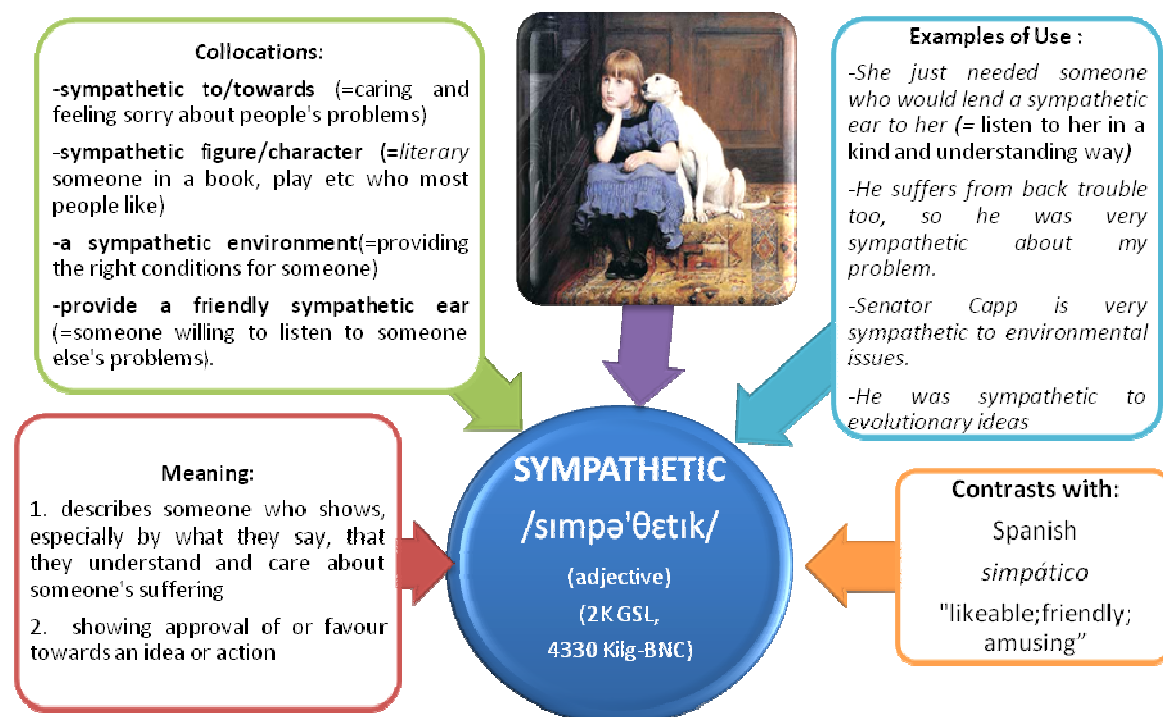
By contrast, the verb *support* is correctly used in texts written by advanced students of English, where the collocation “to support an argument/an idea/” frequently appears.

- ✓ (333) **In order to *support* this argument, we are going to review the following subjects: Labour discrimination, the right to vote, the fight against male chauvinist behaviours, the representation of women in important political charges and the recognition of the sexuality in woman. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0005.1>**
- ✓ (334) **Let me give more examples to *support* my idea. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0032.3>**
- ✓ (335) **Finally some people *support* the idea of an army formed totally by profesional soldiers. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0040.3>**

As a conclusion, it is necessary to point out that whenever the English sense of the verb is kept in learner language, it frequently collocates with words, such as *idea*, *argument*... However, these collocations are not registered in the British component of the *International Corpus of English* (ICE) a representative corpus of native English.

► **SYMPATHETIC** (phonetic) (adjective): Origin: mid 17th century from modern Latin *sympathēticus*, after Greek *συμπαθητικός*.

In English, someone is *sympathetic* when this person understands and cares about someone's suffering, e.g. *The boss was sympathetic to their request*. This lexical item is very similar in its form to the Spanish adjective *simpático*. In spite of their similarity, these two adjectives, *sympathetic* and *simpático*, do not involve the same qualities; consequently, they are false friends.



*Simpático* is a “nice or likeable person” whereas *sympathetic* is “considerate and kind.” Therefore, these words must be considered total false friends except in a medical context where *sympathetic* and *simpático* are used to refer to a particular nerve. Regardless of this specific context, both adjectives refer to different qualities as the translations of these terms show below:

(EN) SYMPATHETIC = (SP) COMPASIVO, COMPRENSIVO

(SP) SIMPÁTICO = (EN) NICE

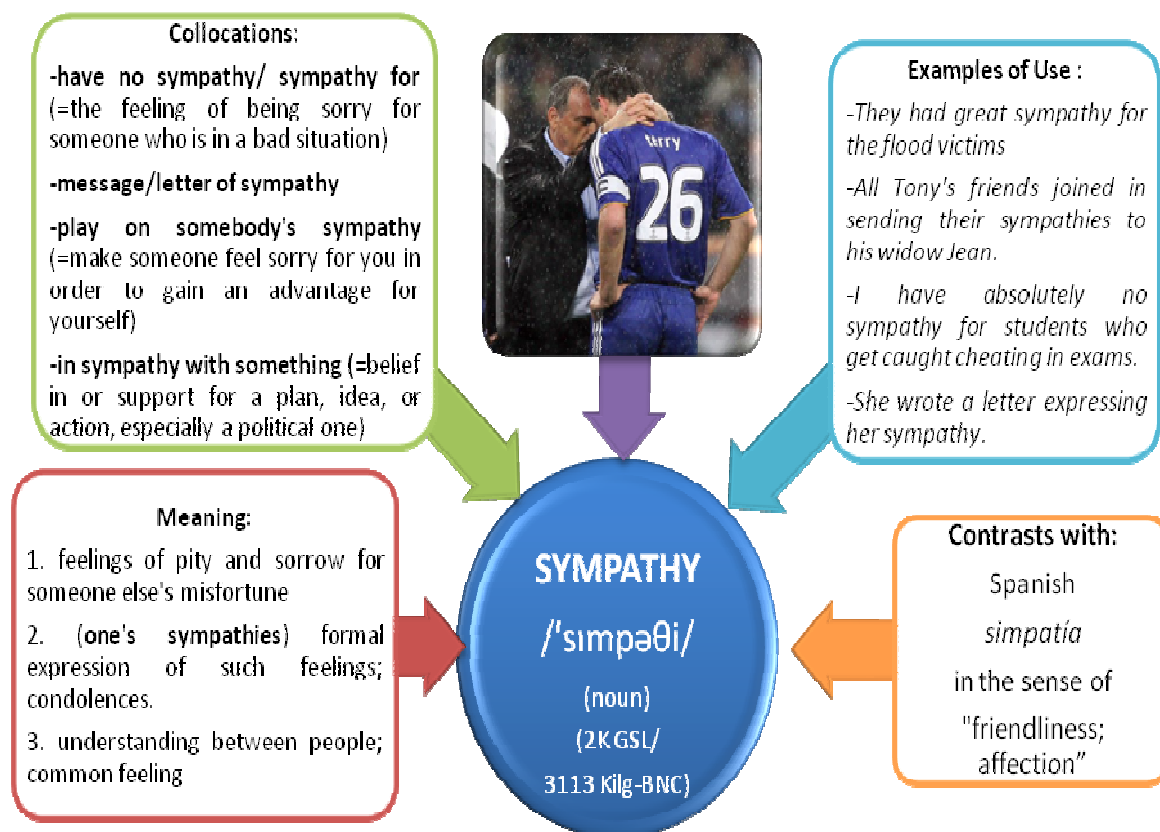
There are five examples of this adjective in the corpora; one in a written sample of SULEC and four in ICLE (two of them in the same text). These examples show that Spanish learners know the meaning of this English adjective.

- ✓ (336) We should be *sympathetic* towards people who do not smoke. Even if they are not ill, they may not like smoking, therefore they should not be forced to be breathing the smoke, becoming passive smokers, unwillingly. (SULEC-WP-AL-DOCUMENT 431)
- ✓ (337) He moves from a character seen as not very *sympathetic*, a bad ruler and a immature person, without consideration towards the others[...] <ICLE-SP-UCM-0021.1>

This word, like many other similar words in the two languages, can be the source of problems. However, *sympathetic* clearly shows the English sense of “understanding” in learner language, especially conspicuous in example 336.

► **SYMPATHY** (noun): Origin: late 16th century: via Latin from Greek *sumpatheia*, from *sumpathēs*, from *sun-* 'with' + *pathos* 'feeling'

As with *sympathetic* and *simpatía*, *sympathy* and *simpatía* are false friends. Their core meanings do not coincide at all; in this sense, they are total false friends. However, if we look deeper into the contexts where these words may be used, both words have the same meaning when used in a political context (e.g *Republican sympathies*, *sympathy for the regime*)



The semantic coincidences and divergences between these two nouns are expressed clearly in the following translations:

(EN) SYMPATHY= (SP) COMPASIÓN; SOLIDARIDAD

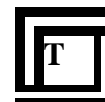
(SP) SIMPATÍA = (EN) FRIENDLINESS; AFFECTION; SYMPATHY (in politics)

There are ten instances which contain the noun *sympathy*. Seven out of ten illustrate the English meaning of this noun, that of “feeling sorry” or “having compassion towards somebody.”

- ✓ (338) **I am in favour of this statement for several reasons: because we should feel *sympathy* towards non-smokers, also respect towards the others (even smokers themselves) and also because I am against drugs in general and tobacco is a drug. (SULEC-WP-AL-DOCUMENT 431)**

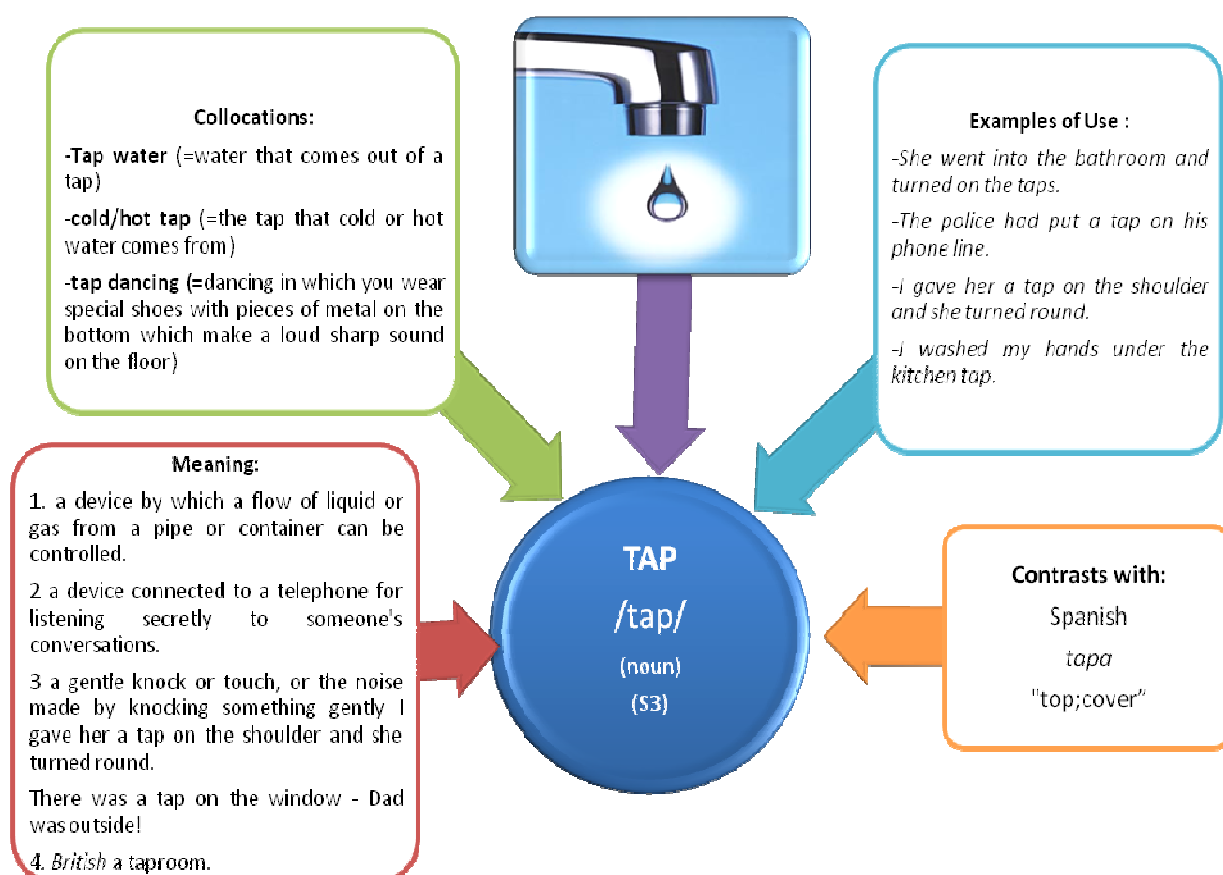
However, there are three examples in which this English noun seems to be tinged with the idea of “developing a liking towards somebody,” rather than with the idea of “feeling sorry.” In this case, semantic transfer is at work.

- ✗ (339) **Although Volpone is a character that, in principle, should not be very trustworthy due to his tricks and chatings on other people, he really achieves among the audience a feeling of *sympathy* and entertainment. We enjoy how Volpone prepares his cheatings and also the way he carries them out. <ICLE-SP-ALC-0005.1>**
- ✗ (340) **Another relevant feature about Edward II is that he is put to test in many extreme tragical situations where he is humiliated and tortured. In those scenes, our *sympathy* for Edward is based in mere humanitarian grounds. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0019.1>**
- ✗ (341) **This character is MOSCA, with whom the audience also has a closer tie of, let us say, affection and *sympathy*. As well as Volpone, mosca is also a very witty, ingenious character who always finds it easy to cheat on other people and accomplish brilliantly all these tricks. <ICLE-SP-ALC-0005.1>**



► **TAP** (noun): Origin: Old English *tæppa* ‘peg for the vent-hole of a cask’, *tæppian* ‘provide (a cask) with a stopper’, of Germanic origin; related to Dutch *tap* and German *Zapfen* (nouns)

The English noun **tap** is a high-frequency word which is normally used in connection with water (e.g. *water tap* or *tap water*) in spoken language. Its Spanish homograph *tapa* has a completely different meaning (“lid”).



The semantic divergence between English **tap** and Spanish *tapa* is clearly illustrated by their corresponding translations below:

(EN) TAP= (SP) GRIFO; PINCHAR EL TELÉFONO

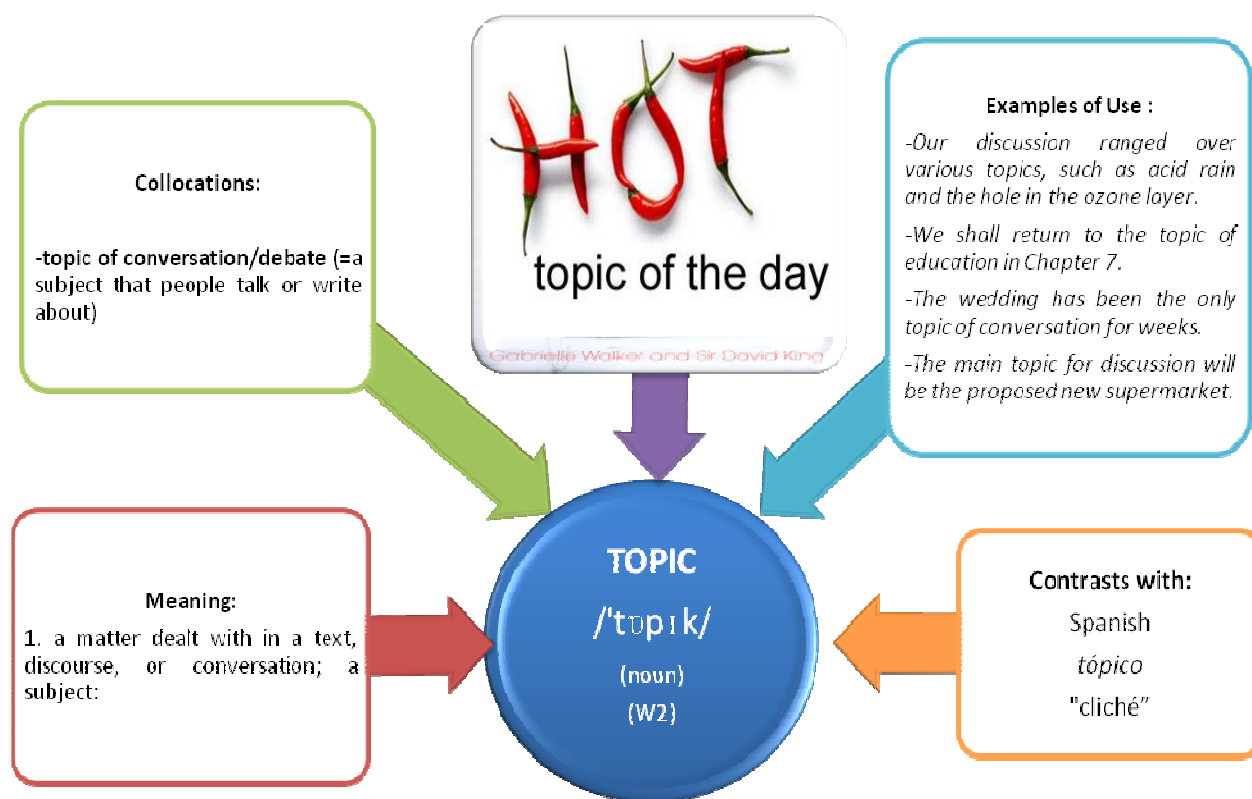
(SP) TAPA = (EN) TOP OF STH; COVER



English **tap** is a high-frequency term which commonly occurs in the spoken mode of communication. It is normally used in connection with three different areas of everyday life: water, telephones and dancing. This might be the reason why Spanish learners do not use this word in their written productions. We find one instance of this word in the spoken component of SULEC (see *section 3.6.2.2.*, pp. 274). However, it is not clear from its context of occurrence if the learners' concept of this word is influenced by their mother tongue.

► **TOPIC** (noun): Origin: late 15<sup>th</sup> century (originally denoting a set or book of general rules or ideas): from Latin *topica*, from Greek *ta topika*, literally “matters concerning commonplaces” (the title of a treatise by Aristotle), from *topos* “a place”

The word **topic** is almost identical in form and pronunciation to the Spanish *tópico*. In spite of this, the meanings of these nouns differ considerably in both languages.



The meanings of these words are illustrated by means of their translations below:

(EN) TOPIC = (SP) SUBJECT MATTER

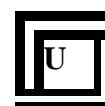
(SP) TÓPICO = (EN) COMMONPLACE

In spite of being total false friends, English *topic* does not represent any real problem for Spanish students of English according to our data. Only one out of 221 examples of *topic* can be said to be influenced by the concept of Spanish *tópico* “commonplace.”

- ✗ (342) Money brutify the persons, it makes grow up in them the ambition for having more and more money. Today there aren't slaves - like the *topic* of black people with chains- but there are slaves of money, people who lives only for money, they consider the first money and after the health, love, family... <ICLE-SP-UCM-0033.3>

The example above is the only case found in which the Spanish sense of the word *tópico* “cliché” can be felt. This example occurs in ICLE and, therefore, in the writing of a student with an advanced level of English. The rest of the examples containing this noun are correct as regards the meaning assigned to them. No interference was detected in the semantic analysis of these examples.

- ✓ (343) The theme of appearances in contrast with reality was a current *topic* in the 17th century English Literature. <ICLE-SP-ALC-0006.1>
- ✓ (344) Television should be just an entertainment, in the same way as going to the cinema or theatre, but it should not dominate the *topic* of our conversations or our way of life, as it does now. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0010.2>
- ✓ (345) Priests and nuns are absolutely against this *topic*, because: "It goes against nature"- they usually say-"Sex has just one final : pro-create"/ "God made a man and a woman to reach happiness on the earth" (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 91)
- ✓ (346) Degrees are focused on introducing students in a lot of new *topics*, but they don't really value if this *topic* would be useful once they start working. (SULEC-WP-AL-DOCUMENT 247)

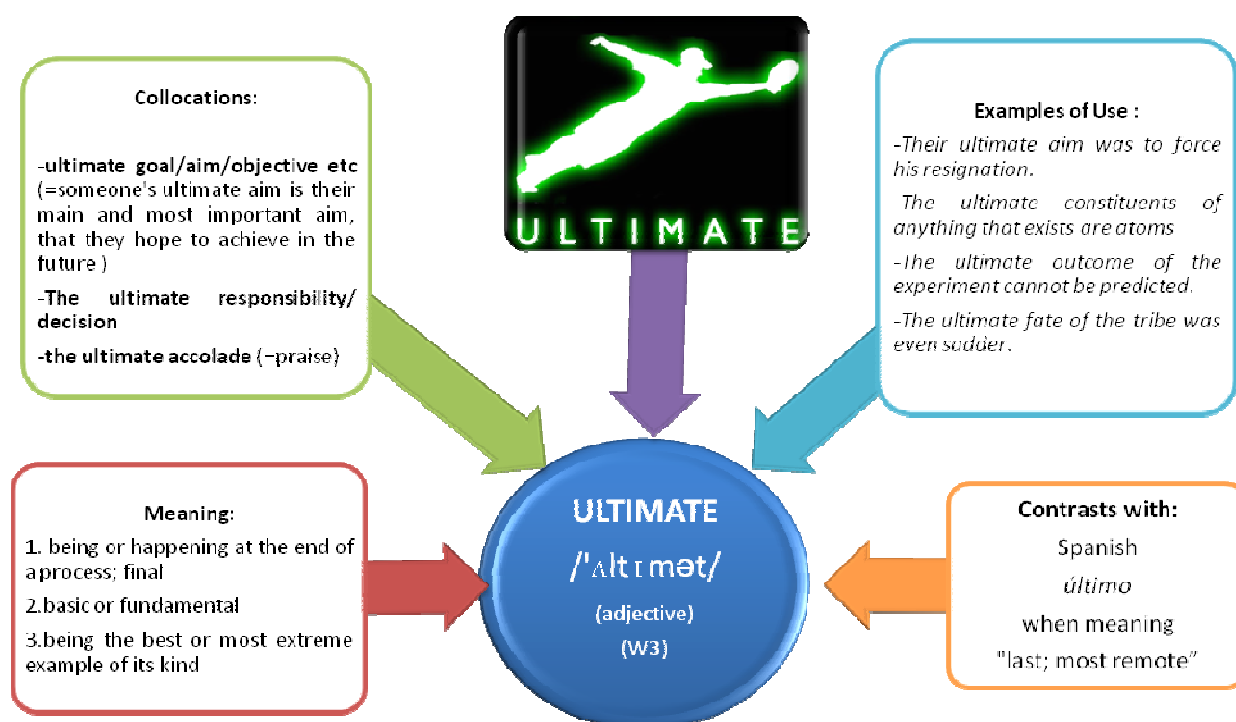


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► **ULTIMATE** (adjective): Origin: mid 17th century: from late Latin *ultimatus*, past participle of *ultimare* 'come to an end'

In English, *ultimate* refers to “the final one, the very last, also the utmost,” (e.g. *For the ultimate in comfort, try our special new beds*) or even “better, bigger, worse than all other things or people of the same kind” (e.g. *The Rolling Stones is the ultimate rock and roll band*). Spanish *último* has the sense of the primary, most important one, as in “el objetivo último,” which means the most important goal. However, the Spanish word

sounds weird in some contexts/phrases where the English adjective naturally occurs (e.g. *the ultimate deterrent/ ultimate responsibility* “el mayor disuasorio”/ “la máxima responsabilidad”). In addition to this, the utterance *It’s the ultimate sports car* cannot be translated into Spanish as “Es el último coche deportivo.” The adjective *último* in Spanish means the last one, not necessarily the latest one (“el más novedoso/el último grito en coches deportivos”) which is the implication that *ultimate* has in English. Therefore, these two adjectives are partial false friends.



The primary sense of these words is basically the same, that of “eventual” or “main (goal);” nevertheless, *ultimate* and *último* are not used in exactly the same contexts and do not have exactly the same collocations. Therefore, they are partial false friends.

The translations provided give us an idea about the semantic similarities and differences between these lexical items in the two languages:

(EN) *ULTIMATE* = (SP) *FINAL* (decision/aim); *MÁXIMO* (responsibility); *LO ÚLTIMO* (“más moderno”)

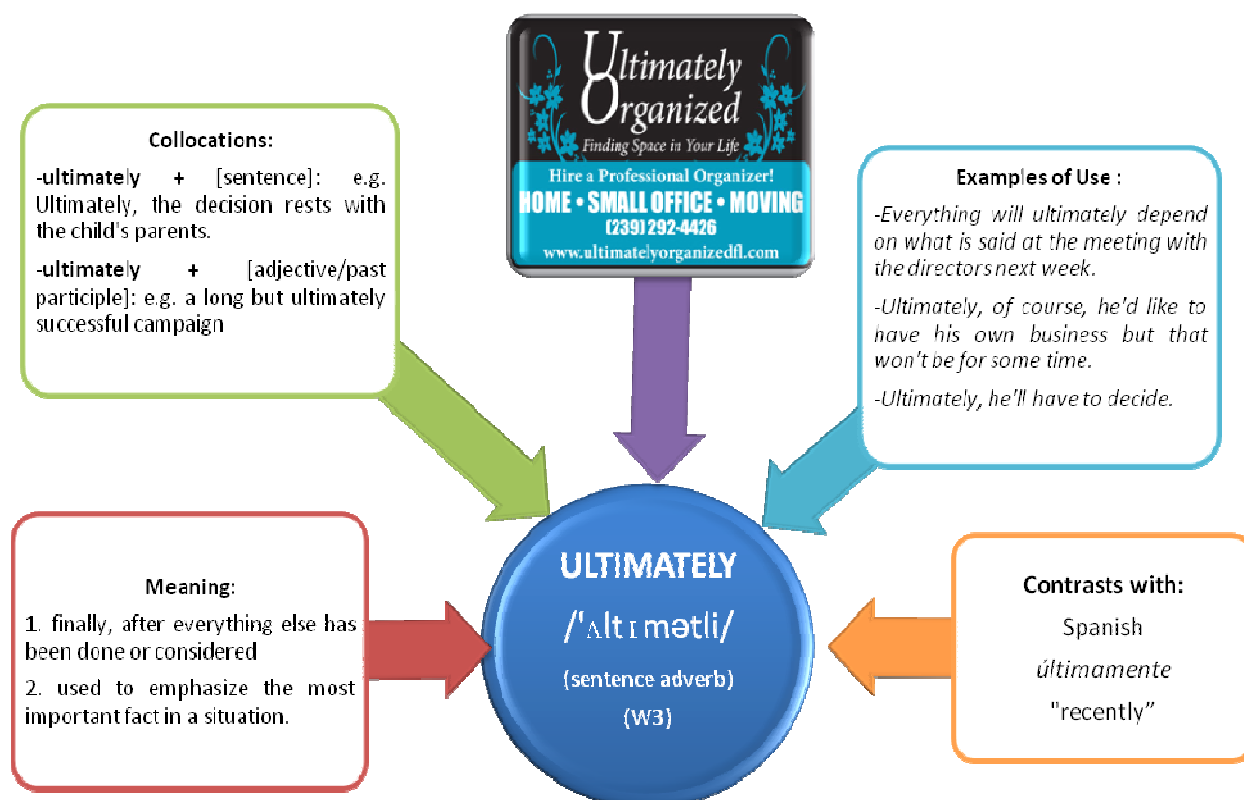
(SP) *ÚLTIMO* = (EN) *LAST* (oferta); *LATEST* (moda); *FINAL*, *END OF* (mes)

This adjective is hardly ever used in the corpora analysed. Contrary to our expectations, it is noteworthy that the two examples where this word occurs are correct.

- ✓ (347) [ ... ] money is a means for achieving all those things which let us have a good finality of life. For instance, a big house, a car, or the *ultimate* technologies. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 393)
- ✓ (348) What it started in the beginning as a rather small organization for economical cooperation among some central European countries turned out into an ambitious plan not only to promote the economic relations within the members, but also with the *ultimate* aim to achieve in the long run a united Europe with common policies, common taxes, no internal borders whatsoever and even with the implantation of the same currency: the ECU. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0014.2>

► **ULTIMATELY** (adverb): Origin: mid 17th century: from late Latin *ultimatus*, past participle of *ultimare* 'come to an end' + LY suffix

The sentence adverb *ultimately* derives from *ultimate*. It is frequently used in written language, either to “add emphasis” or to mean “finally or basically.” This word is similar to the Spanish adverb *últimamente*. However, their meanings and uses differ in some ways. Thus, the English word *ultimately* would never be translated into Spanish as *últimamente* “finally.”



There are better alternatives for the translation of *ultimately*. There is also some degree of semantic divergence between these two adverbs. The semantic nuances of both terms are made obvious with the translations provided below:

(EN) ULTIMATELY = (SP) EN ÚLTIMA INSTANCIA; BÁSICAMENTE; FINALMENTE;  
 POR ÚLTIMO  
 (SP) ÚLTIMAMENTE = (EN) RECENTLY; OF LATE; LATELY; FINALLY

The following examples show how Spanish learners use this lexical item. The use of *ultimately* in example 349 is semantically correct, although its position in the sentence is inaccurate (it should be *ultimately refers to* instead of *refers ultimately to*).

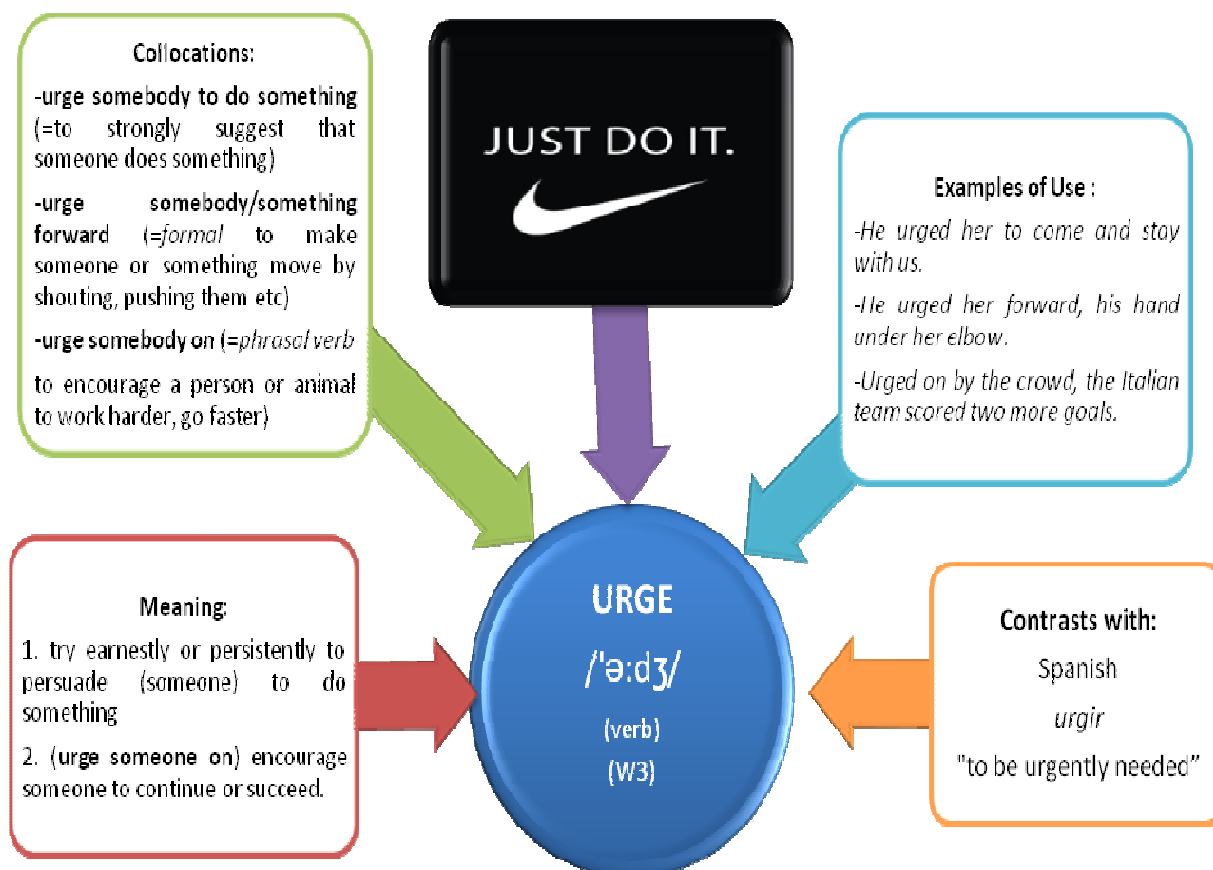
- ✓ (349) **This must be taken in a broad sense, and refers *ultimately* to the capacity of human beings to tell their own story, that is, to tell themselves.**  
**<ICLE-SP-UCM-0019.4>**

The other two instances in which this word occurs are clearly influenced by the meaning of the Spanish adverb *últimamente* (“lately”). The semantic properties of this verb appear to be transferred into English from Spanish and learners use it to mean “lately; recently” rather than “finally or basically.” Examples from both ICLE and SULEC show this.

- ✗ (350) **it only remains to add that nowadays we live in a world in which the technology is habitual and the imagination takes place on a second plan [...]Ultimately, then it is wonderful to have the power of fiction and the attitud to polish the inventiveness.** <ICLE-SP-UCM-0050.3>
- ✗ (351) **And if not, there will always be your OWN home where you can smoke as much as you want since it is your PARTICULAR AND PRIVATE home and not PUBLIC. Non-smokers, *ultimately*, don't have to suffer and pay the consequences of addiction of other peopole or the mistake of having fallen in it** (SULEC-WP-AL-DOCUMENT 1164)

► **URGE** (verb): Origin: mid 16th century: from Latin *urgere* 'press, drive'

The verb *urge* and *urgir* are somewhat related; both of them mean “encourage.” However, the Spanish verb involves an idea of urgency which is not expressed by the English term. For this reason, both terms must be considered to be total false friends.



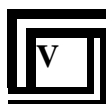
The semantic difference between these two verbs is expressed in the form of a different translation in each case:

(EN) URGE = (SP) INSTAR, INCITAR A HACER ALGO

(SP) URGIR= (EN) BE URGENTLY NEEDED

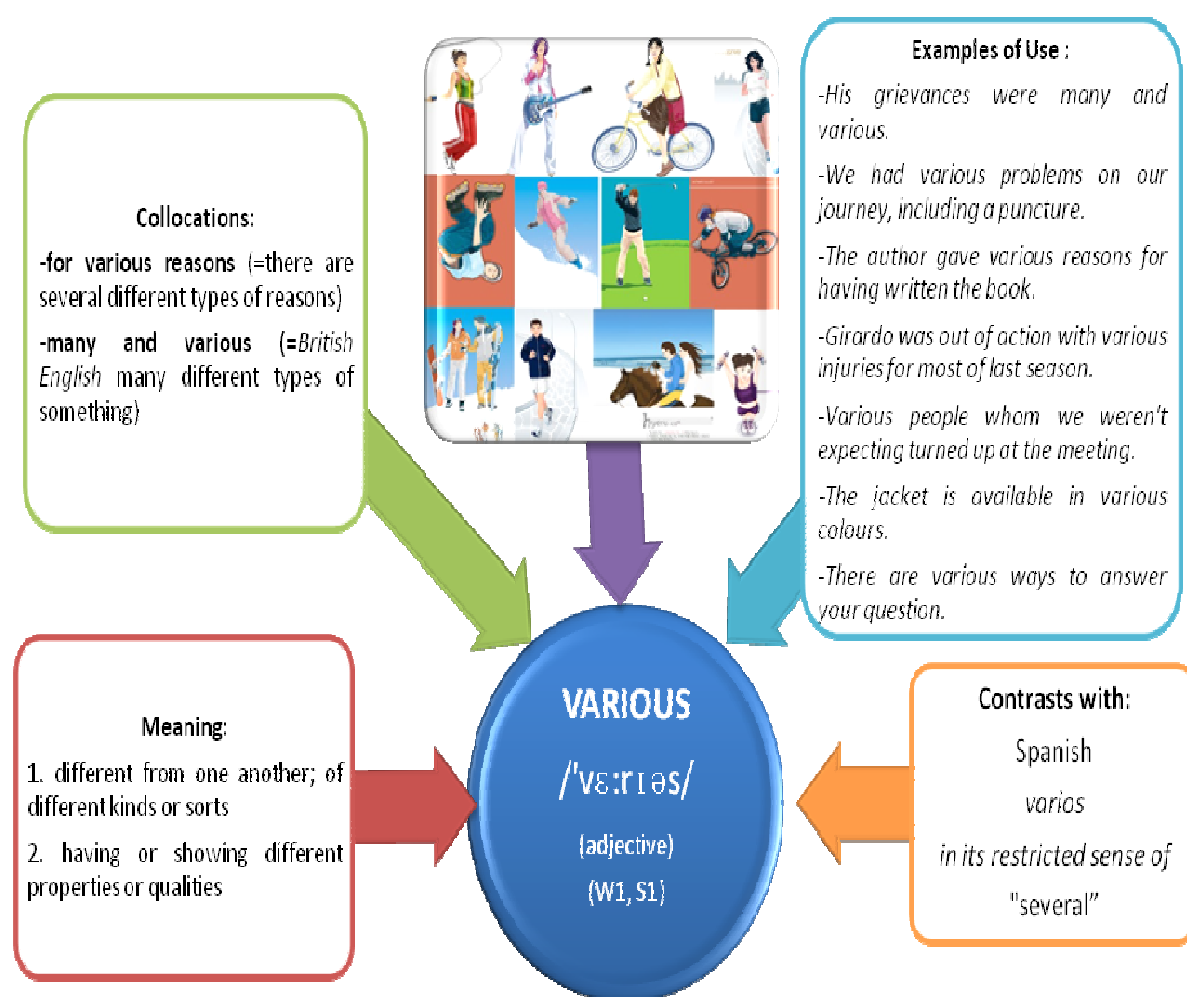
The verb *urge* is correctly used by Spanish learners of English. The two examples found illustrate the correct semantics of this word. The correct syntactic structure “to urge sb to do something” is used in example 352, while the structure found in example 353 is ungrammatical. Even so, the sentence is registered as correct since the semantic characteristics of English *urge* are kept.

- ✓ (352) the less important is the role psychiatrics play inside jail. They steer prisoners all the time and *urge* them to focus their lives towards a positive experience. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0057.4>
- ✓ (353) Human life perfectly knows that money make him more harm than good. He thinks that conditions him and lowrs and forbids his person. But also he knows that without mone nobody is able to live: it is the motor that *urges* on the movements of the Human Nature. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0047.4>



► **VARIOUS** (adjective): Origin: late Middle English: from Latin *varius* 'changing, diverse' + -ous

*Various* and *varios* are two interlingual homographs which basically have the same referential meaning. Both adjectives denote more than a few; however, the entities involved are different in each case.



The corresponding translations of these adjectives show the existing overlap/distance between these two forms:

(EN) **VARIOUS** = (SP) **VARIOS**, **DIVERSOS**

(SP) **VARIOS** = (EN) **VARIOUS**, **SEVERAL**

In spite of that, there are some collocations which are not found in both languages (Spanish *varias personas* or English *at various times*). These small differences in use turn these two adjectives into partial or even contextual false friends. Broadly speaking, they are interchangeable in most contexts (e.g. *various reasons*, *various ways of doing it*, etc might be equivalent to Spanish “*varias razones*,” “*varias formas de hacerlo*”); however, there are some nuances of use which differ in both languages. In order to reach conclusions on the use of this item, I asked for the help of a native speaker who could help me decide whether these examples are accurate or not. According to the native English sensitivity, the word *several* might be preferred in example 354 although the use of *various* does not cause problems of comprehension.

- ✖ (354) **Second, it exists a gradual process for redintegrate those people in the society. There are *various* degrees of imprisonment. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0056.4>**

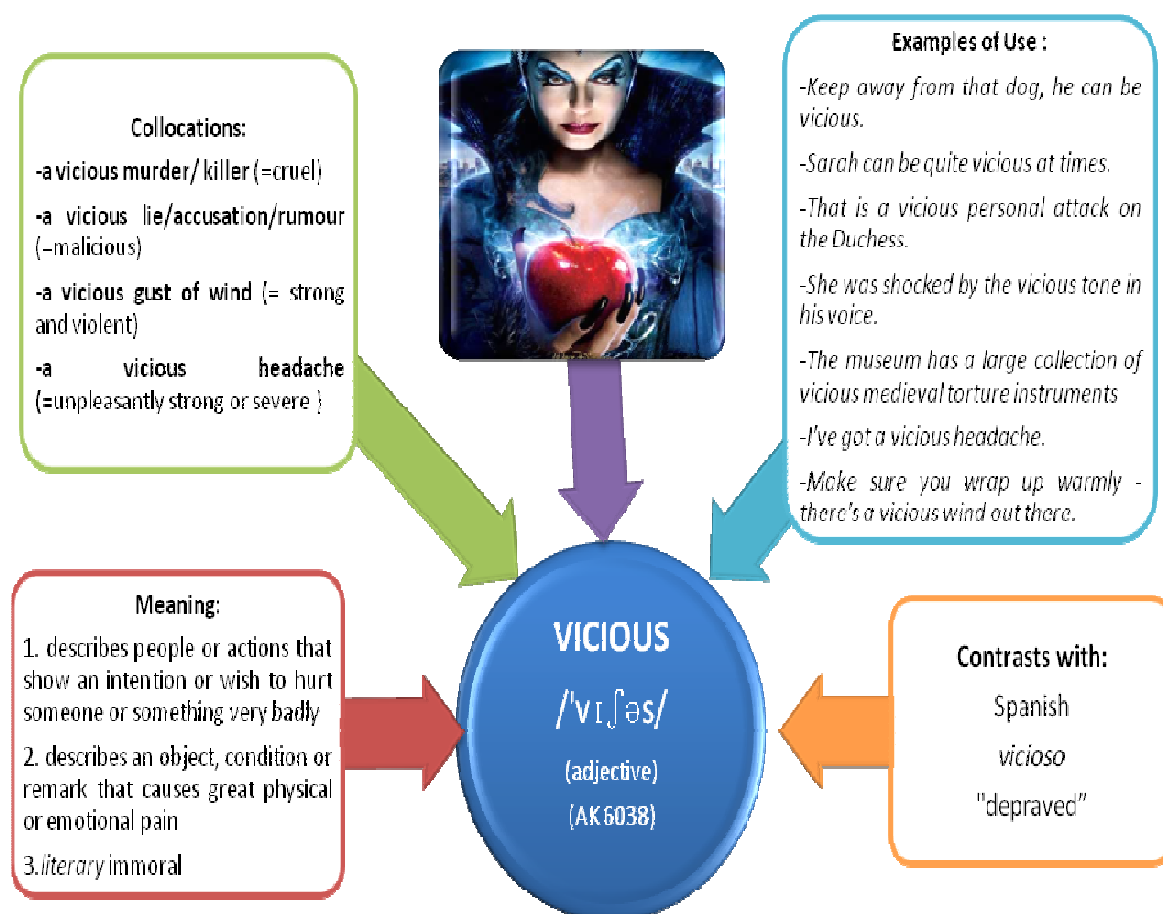
However, the word *various* is totally acceptable in examples 355 and 356.

- ✓ (355) **Having considered the various aspects of capitalism a conclusion must be gathered: the system cannot provide for the basic needs of the population <ICLE-SP-UCM-0009.4>**
- ✓ (356) **it is very difficult the whole of the civics from the same country, city, village, etc, comes to an understanding with the possibility of the criminals rehabilitation, because in a same community there are various opinions (because there are a lot of reasons: culture ones, religion ones,...). <ICLE-SP-UCM-0018.4>**

► **VICIOUS** (adjective): Origin: Middle English (in the sense ‘characterised by immorality’): from Old French *vicious* or Latin *vitiosus*, from *vitium* ‘vice.’

*Vicious* and *vicioso* are two adjectives which have little to do with each other. Although they both have negative connotations, their core semantics are quite far away from each other. There is just one very specific context where *vicious* and *vicioso* are identically used, in the phrase *vicious circle* which would be *círculo vicioso* in Spanish.





The semantic properties of these two adjectives are clearly observed in their corresponding translations:

(EN) VICIOUS = (SP) FERROZ, CRUEL, DESPIADADO, MALINTENCIONADO

(SP) VICIOSO = (EN) DISSOLUTE, DEPRAVED

The English adjective *vicious* is mainly used as a noun, rather than as an adjective, in learner language. Six out of the eleven examples found show an erroneous use of this word. Students write *vicious* where they should use *vice*. Students fail to differentiate the Spanish term *vicio* and its English lookalike *vicious*. Students think that they are equivalent, as shown below.

- × (357) In my opinion smoking in public places should be illegal. I think that smoke is a bad habit and a terrible *vicious*. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 306)
- × (358) I think that all people should be tolerate with the other persons and with their *vicious*, unless also should be illegal play to computer games or drink alchool in public places. I think that everybody should have consideration of other persons when their have a *vicious* such as for exampole smoke. (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 348)

Spanish learners of English tend to give a different meaning to the adjective *vicious*. This qualitative adjective means “brutal or malicious” (e.g. *Sarah can be quite vicious at times* or *He has a vicious tongue*). However, Spanish learners of English use it in the sense of “sexually addicted,” as the following example indicates.

- ✱ **(359) the marriage of persons of the same sex can't be allowed this marriage is totally "contra-natura". [ ... ] the people minds: "the homosexual persons are vicious!!" (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 1002)**

There are three instances of the English collocation *vicious circle*, two in ICLE and one in SULEC; at first sight, this could be regarded as an example of interference but this is not the case. This set expression is totally acceptable in English. Thus, the following instances are correct:

- ✓ **(360) Prison, that should be a way of integration, has turned to a *vicious circle*. People who go to Jail do not rehabilitate, quite the opposite. Sometimes non guilty persons go to prison and they become corrupted there. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0009.1>**
- ✓ **(361) Classes, subjects and teachers (although not all) are not good for the students. This is because there is like a *vicious circle* among them. The classes xx do not have the best material and the subjects sometimes are not really necessary. Moreover the teachers don't be with the students, it xx means, they don't have interest or maybe they have lost it to teach correctly. All xx these things are mixed, and the consequence is students who are not prepared and probably they are afraid to face the world. (SULEC-WP-AL-DOCUMENT 857)**

### 3.6.2.2. Qualitative Analysis of False Friends in Spoken Language

After presenting the qualitative analysis of the learners' use of false friends in writing, this section is intended to show evidence of the use of false friends in the learners' spoken production. For the analysis of false friends in learners' speech, two spoken databases have been used, namely the spoken component of SULEC and the spoken counterpart of ICLE, that is, the *Louvain International Database of Spoken English Interlanguage* (LINDSEI). The latter is an independent database which follows the same criteria as ICLE; it gathers spoken data of English learners. Data from these corpora will show the frequency of English false friends in the learners' speech and the problems these lexical units may cause in the students' oral production. These databases will definitely help us explore the use of English false friends in the spoken interlanguage of Spanish learners.

As regards the size of these spoken databases, they are not as large as their written counterparts; nevertheless, they are sufficient in order to give us a clear idea of the presence and use of these words in learner language. As for SULEC, there is a technical problem with the number of words since the same text is on certain occasions repeated twice in the corpus. This is due to the fact that the corpus compilers made the decision to include the texts twice whenever there are two participants in the conversation so that the personal information of both participants could be entered in the computer programme. In spite of this, the corpus offers useful information on the use of these words in learner language so this database is a valuable tool for the analysis. In order to solve this problem, those texts were excluded from the word count; the final sample size contains a total number of 137,660 words.<sup>61</sup> In the case of LINDSEI,<sup>62</sup> it consists of 50 interviews and contains 118,536 words (including notation words and codes).

As the meanings and use of the false friends analysed were shown in the flower-like diagrams of the previous section, it seems redundant to include this information again here and now. I will just write the lemma under analysis, say if there is evidence of this word in the spoken corpora and I will add some brief remarks about some relevant sample sentences occurring in the spoken databases analysed. Any other information is disregarded in order to prevent overlaps and repetition with the contents in the previous pages. Therefore, constant reference to the previous section is recommended as the discussion presented in the following pages might be considered to be brief and concise.

► **ACCOMMODATE** (verb): No evidence of this verb is recorded in the learners' spoken language.

► **ACTUAL** (adjective): The adjective *actual* is found in the two spoken databases. As regards the oral component of SULEC, we find once again the learners' tendency to use *actual* with the meaning of "current." Example 362 illustrates this use. The student here uses the English word *actual* as if it were a synonym of "present-day." This is further confirmed by the co-occurrence of this adjective with "today," and "nowadays."

✱ (362) I prefer .. celebrate . my parties</B> <everybody laughs><somebody coughs> <C>uhu</C> <D>how do you think mhm that that photograph

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<sup>61</sup>For instance, when we search for the word *actual* in SULEC, the computer program provides 5 examples of this word in learner language. However, when analysing the texts in which it occurs, we observe that two of these texts are repeated so the final count is 3 examples.

<sup>62</sup> See section 3.4.2., pp. 62-63 for further information about LINDSEI.

**compares to this one? . in what ways is it similar or different? .. er other than the fact that that is and old one and this is a new one</D> <B>that's actual and and ... today . nowadays . this . this photo ... I don't know it's</B> <D>thinking about in terms of clothing <x> what they're wearing eh or the way they're acting (SULEC-SP-AL-DOCUMENT 1081/1082)**

Even though learners tend to misuse this word both in their written and spoken production, we do find an example exhibiting the right use of this word in learners' speech. The following example illustrates this; we here find the association between *actual* and its true meaning "real."

- ✓ (363) **and the materials we use are going to use are for the presentation is. the transparency this one but for the actual real lesson will be these photocopies <she points at them> (SULEC-SP-AL-DOCUMENT 516)**

By contrast, the data in LINDSEI seem to contradict this picture. In fact, this adjectival false friend is mostly used in its English sense of "existing in fact."

- \* (364) **<A> yeah . and then down here . what do you think are the main differences between the painting <overlap /> and . the </A> <B> <overlap /> and the actual lady </B> [...] < LINDSEI\_SP007>**

Nevertheless, there is evidence in LINDSEI that confirms that the English word *actual* is difficult to acquire. Although students are sometimes aware of the fact that *actual* does not mean "current," their first impulse leads them to use it in this sense, as shown in the example below:

- \* (365) **(er) .. seems . or are . are very . very interesting for me because he speaks about everything about he speaks about literature . he speaks about politics . about actual issues well current issues . that are .. that are happening now .. about (mm) universal topics or things like love or . friendship or whatever </B>< LINDSEI\_SP013>**

► **ACTUALLY** (adverb): This adverb does not seem to be really problematic in the learners' spoken production (contrary to what I expected to find). There are few cases in which the word *actually* is used with the meaning of "nowadays" in the spoken language of Spanish learners.

- \* (366) **e:h .. actually now I'm: studying to be a teacher .. but maybe that . wouldn't be the job as well <laugh> .. (SULEC-SP-AL-DOCUMENT 536)**

In fact, this sentence adverbial is mostly used as a way of adding new information or drawing a contrast with an idea that has been previously stated.

- ✓ (367) well *actually* I think he knows what he's doing but .. e:h .. he's waiting for a: .. for somebody to come obviously .. a:nd . well I think .. this is all (SULEC-SP-AL-DOCUMENT 550)
- ✓ (368) (mhm) (mhm) . that's really cool . so you *actually* get to see them grow <overlap /> <laughs> <LINDSEI\_SP017>
- ✓ (369) I think she: she is proud of herself <laughs> because (er:) she look she looks (mm) very nice she looks a: a very pretty woman in the picture . (er) from my point of view I think she: she appears (erm) . prettier than she is . *actually* </B> <LINDSEI\_SP002>

In most sample sentences found in SULEC and LINDSEI, this use is constantly observed. In addition to this, the overlap between English and Spanish in the use of this adverb is perceived in the following example.

- × (370) <A> (mhm) okay . wha= what would you like to do after you finish your degree </A><B> I *actually* don't know </B><LINDSEI\_SP035>

It is not clear from the learners' words if she means "I really do not know" or "at the moment, I don't know." In any case, as the resulting utterance does not entail any communicative problem, it has been included in the column of correct sentences.

► **ADEQUATE** (adjective): There are no occurrences of this word in the spoken learner interlanguage.

► **ADVERTISE** (verb): No hits of this verb have been found in the spoken language of Spanish learners.

► **ADVICE** (noun):<sup>63</sup> The use of this noun does not exhibit features of semantic transfer. However, as shown in example 371, there are problems in the form of the word; some students add an -s to this noun to make it plural. This might be the result of L1 formal transfer or an overgeneralization of the target language rules. In any case, morphological problems were not here considered as the meaning attributed to this word is correct.

- ✓ (371) But fathers and grandfathers belong to the family <D> Yeah yeah also . I:'m I'm thinking .. <C> So well . this is not a good reason I .. I mean . because you said well fa= <D> I I mean .. that . family give good *advices* and friends [frIendz] also <C> Advice <D> Yeah <C> Friends <D> Aha <C> Do you think friends . give good *advice* as well? <D> Sí <C> Aha .. OK Noemí . can you tell us something about (SULEC-SP-AL-DOCUMENT 637/638)
- ✓ (372) <B> well I could say that we should follow their ad= . not their *advice* but their example <LINDSEI\_SP006>

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<sup>63</sup> In the case of SULEC, the initial number of 48 occurrences of the word was divided by two (24) because all the texts in which it occurs are repeated twice.

► **ADVISE** (transitive verb): This verb does not frequently occur in the learners' spoken English. In fact, there is only one example in SULEC and no examples at all in LINDSEI. This verb shows no traces of semantic transfer in SULEC. Although it is difficult to understand what the learner actually means in this text, *advise* is obviously used in the English sense of "counsel" and is included in the column of correct uses.

- ✓ (373) Aha so maybe the the piece of advice that you:r grandmothe:r . gave to you about some time ago . was it better than you:r mother's advice . because she's older? <D> Hmm .. well yeah .. hmm yeah <C> So would you follow her advice .. rather than your mothers advice perhaps? <D> Aha <C> Yes? do you prefer to: <D> Depending o:n .. o:n o:n which subject I: I: was asking asking advice <C> Hmm can you explain that? <D> Hmm if not if I'm not them *advised* about studies o:r future . laboral life tha:t about my: personal life o:r friends or boyfriends <C> Aha OK aah right ... (SULEC-SP-AL-DOCUMENT 637/638)

► **ANNOUNCE** (verb): The learners' use of this verb does not differ from the native's use. In actual fact, the verb *announce* is used in the right context and with the right meaning. The fact that this verb is a partial false friend with Spanish *anunciar* and covers the English sense of "to make something public" may have a bearing on the correct use of this word. Finally, it is also necessary to point out that this word is misspelt since it is very often written with a single "n."

- ✓ (374) Nowadays smoking in public places has become a current affair in Spain as a result of the new reforms of the government, 'the antitobacco law'. Until very recently restaurants and bars were all smoking-zones, but now the government in Spain has *anounced* measures to reduce the tobacco-addition.

► **APPARENT** (adjective): No hits of this adjective were found in the spoken databases.

► **APPOINT** (verb): There are no occurrences of this verb either in LINDSEI or in the spoken component of SULEC.

► **ARGUMENT** (noun): The polysemy of this noun is illustrated in the learners' use of this word. As a matter of fact, *argument* is correctly used with two different senses: that of "quarrel, disagreement" and that of "reasons which support a particular opinion." Examples 375 and 376 show the first sense in the collocation "to have an argument with somebody;" and examples 377 and 378 are an illustration of the second one.

- ✓ (375) the boy is thinking that his father is a: . a rambo <laugh> or something like this because . e:h . but . I think in someway he's afraid . because . he thinks his father is going to have an *argument* with the . others . others father other parents' boy (SULEC-SP-AL-DOCUMENT 547)

- ✓ (376) <B> (em) . everyday . I had to come back . to the house at eleven o'clock . at night . but one day . I: I arrived later . only one qua= a quarter . more or less . and (eh) . I had an *argument* with the: . with the: woman of the house . < LINDSEI\_SP023>
- ✓ (377) What do you think? Go ahead and you know give us your side of the *argument* . should we ban certain books from the libraries o:r you know o:r from even book stores should certain books not be allowed? (SULEC-SP-AL- DOCUMENT 635/636)
- ✓ (378) <B> and . I don't know you . I always find something interesting when reading . Fernando Savater .. and maybe (eh) also because of his (er) . reasoning style . he . he always (er) reasons (er) or . yes he always (erm) . argues his (eh) . his (er) . *arguments* . in a very . good way . like making clear (mm) very . very well what he wants to highlight< LINDSEI\_SP013>

► **ASSIST** (verb): No occurrences were attested for *assist* or its related forms (e.g. *assisting*, *assisted*, *assists*) in LINDSEI. However, its use in SULEC suggests that this verb is problematic both in spoken and in written discourse. More specifically, learners use *assist* in the place of “attend classes” which would be the most suitable verb phrase in English. Example 379 from SULEC shows this problem.

- ✗ (379) I think English is very important fo:r my life a:nd . well</B> <A>ok and you? María?</A> <C>well maybe the same reason but because mhm I know that at first I couldn't *assist* here to classes but I: went to another classes different and I think that it's a good idea to take some credit as we need to enter the degree (SULEC-SP-IL-DOCUMENT 1287/1288)

The Spanish word *asistir* (meaning “to attend”) is clearly influencing the learners’ use of this word, as shown in the example above.

► **ATTEND** (verb): The verb *attend* is accurately used in the spoken language of Spanish learners represented in SULEC and LINDSEI. In fact, students use it in the sense of “to go to class regularly.” Most speakers make use of the collocation *attend classes* or *attend lessons*. This last phrase has been regarded as grammatically correct because one can say things like *my boyfriend is required to attend lessons at Endesa*. Although there might be a better sounding option to this collocation, native corpora such as the BNC register this collocation and therefore it was included in the column of good uses of the word. Data from both corpora show that Spanish learners know what *attend* means and how it should be used.

- ✓ (380) there are actors in the streets too <A> [...]<B> maybe not not here in Santiago or in A Coruña but <laugh> in the streets of Madrid or <A> yeah .. yeah but I think it's safer to: .. maybe to study or to: . to: *attend* . classes to: of . performing art (SULEC-SP-AL-DOCUMENT 536)

- ✓ (381) can you play any: instrument? <A> yes I I I play the: piano <B> the piano? <A> mhm <B> and . have you: been studying for a long time? <A> no I have been studying fo:r .. three or four years .. is: and .. I play it very bad .. I'm a a a disaster . but <B> <laugh> at least you try .. where do you attend lessons? (SULEC-SP-IL-DOCUMENT 556)
- ✓ (382) <B> is well while I've been there . for . (mm) . twelve years . from . pre-scholar . to . C O U . I well it was a school . which was (eh) . directed by by priests . a a private school . (mm) I think that's the . the best experience which I've had in my life because . when you go out of there . well perhaps when when you're inside . you always think ah these priests always saying no don't don't do that don't do this . but when you go out . you see what what they have . done for you . and all the all the . all the habits with . which they have created . in you such as for example . attending classes <LINDSEI\_SP001>

► **BALANCE, BANK, BATTERIES and BIZARRE:** No hits for these words and its related forms were retrieved in the corpora analysed.

► **BLANK** (noun): *Blank* is correctly used in the two oral presentations where it occurs in SULEC; and it is used in connection with some well-known school activities such as *fill in the gaps* or *fill in the blank* tasks. This means that we cannot describe any problems in the use of this word from the data retrieved from SULEC (no occurrences of this noun were found in LINDSEI).

- ✓ (383) another exercise . was . to fill in the blanks . looking at the pictures they have to use the prepositions in the box and they have to complete the sentence for example the bottles are on the table the: glasses are for example in front of the bottles 1249)

► **CAMP** (noun): Contrary to the initial expectations, this English noun is correctly used both in SULEC and LINDSEI. If we analyse the contexts in which it appears, we observe that this lexical item is suitably used in connection with “summer camps” or “concentration camps.”

- ✓ (384) in London . two months two sorry two weeks .. and .. then .. in the in the . in Brighton .. well only .. travelling .. but going . going not stopping there .. only just . eh ..going .. going through . not .. as a way to go to another place .. and to . in a little town .. in a camp in . a . <x> south .. in in in a camp <x> holiday . where I worked .. and I lived there (SULEC-SP-AL-DOCUMENT 540)
- ✓ (385) <B> (eh) (eh) I want to talk about an experience I have with some children from the hospital [...]this summer we are going to the safari . <overlap /> with them </B><A> <overlap /> nice </A><B> yeah .. and we have also a .. a summer camp </B> < LINDSEI\_SP017>
- ✓ (386) <B> Life is Beautiful </B> [...]the film (er) has (er) many values (er) the love between the: the two the: he and the princess and and the child and



. it's very tender and . (er) how the mother (er) (er) sacrifice for for her family and go to the: to the concentration *camp* con= to the concentration *camp* </B> <LINDSEI\_SP017>

► **CAREER** (noun): An analysis of both spoken and written data seems to confirm that the noun *career* is difficult for Spanish learners of English. In fact, even advanced students resort to this word to refer to a university course; *career* is frequently associated with the studying process.

- \* (387) What do you plan on doing this summer? What have you planned [for the summer? <A> [For the summer well I I want to go abroad but I think I'll have to stay in Santiago because I I want to: finish my *career* and I have to study (SULEC-SP-AL-DOCUMENT 596)
- \* (388) X <B> yes . it's my . but it's my second (eh) *career* the one I'm doing now . and the first one I did from the teaching . training but infant education </B><LINDSEI\_SP021>
- \* (389) <B> two years as a second cycle . *career* <XXX> if you have finished one three year *career* you can still continue with the other </B> <LINDSEI\_SP026>

Despite this general tendency, there is one learner in SULEC who uses this noun correctly as shown below.

- ✓ (390) would you like to do an audition for ot?. would you like to try to go? <B> no. because i am very shy and i don't like it. <mm> <C> and do you think that your voice is good enough to have a *career*? (SULEC-SP-AL-DOCUMENT 1100/1101)

► **CARPET** (noun): The occurrence of this noun in the spoken production of Spanish learners does not show any traces of semantic transfer as can be seen from the example below.

- ✓ (391) in the house there is a .*carpet* covering all the: .. all the floor (SULEC-SP-AL-DOCUMENT 583)

► **CHARACTER** (noun): Students use this noun in a correct way. They make use of it to refer to the nature of a person or group of people as in, for instance, the Greek character (example 392); and to refer to the leading role of an individual in a book or film (example 393 to 395).

- ✓ (392) doing things in front of the others it's . it does no go with my: *character* . I don't know (...) Greeks in *character* are . like us . like us very talkative... (SULEC-SP-AL-DOCUMENT 539)
- ✓ (393) from the eighties. A love story between the two main *characters* (SULEC-SP-AL-DOCUMENT 1092)

- ✓ (394) <B> but (em) . I think they're more . developed as *characters* . than the other girl </B><A> what do you think of the plot </A><LINDSEI\_SP007>
- ✓ (395) <B> I think it's very . it's very interesting in that in that way . and the *characters* the settings . even the filming . apart from the actors and the . the script </B>< LINDSEI\_SP005>

► **COLLEGE** (noun): The noun *college* is used to refer to a “school” twice, once in SULEC and once in LINDSEI; although we can talk about college uniforms in English, we should note here that the speaker is talking about a little boy crying so the correct word will be school rather than *college*. The phrase “school uniform” would be more suitable in that particular context.

- \* (396) there was a: . a little boy . who who's crying . and running . mm to tell what had happened to his father . eh because he hurt .. someone has . punched him in . the eye . (...) eh the boy is . wearing a cap . and a jacket . it's like a the uniform of a *college* or something like that . a:nd . a jacket and short trousers . a:nd shoes and . white socks <laugh> (SULEC-SP-AL-DOCUMENT 583)

Something similar happens in example 397 where the noun highschool or secondary school would sound more natural in the context. In English, a *college* is an educational institution or a university where you can generally study *after* secondary education.

- \* (397) <B> no I don't like teaching to children because I think they hum the . schools and *colleges* here in Spain . children well children they are they are . older peop= (eh) they think I think they are very conflictive people and . I can't stand them I . I don't like them </B><LINDSEI\_SP026>

By contrast, the word *college* is appropriately used in the following cases:

- ✓ (398) I sent a: .. a short novel to: you know Ruta Quetzal? <B> mm? <A> Quetzal? <B> oh! yeah? <A> but <B>:: didn't get the prize <B> you tried <A> yeah <B> but here in . in the *college* you have a: like a magazine or something like that? <A> yeah e:h .. Dani is the: .. <B> yeah I know .. and you: you have not tried to: to write something? <A> I tried last .. last year but .. I didn't like the: .. the woman who: who directed the: the magazine . so I didn't try this year (SULEC-SP-IL-DOCUMENT 558)
- ✓ (399) <A> Cambridge </A> <B> (mhm) it's a: it's a very beautiful city (erm) it it: it it's full with many *colleges* </B> <LINDSEI\_SP026>
- ✓ (400) I go to school at Saratoga Springs </A><B> ah . Skid= Skidmore *College* </B><LINDSEI\_SP002>

► **CONFIDENT** (adjective): This adjective is exclusively found in LINDSEI in the compound adjective *self-confident* with its corresponding truth value of “self-assured.”

✓ **she's a self <overlap /> confident woman </B> <LINDSEI\_SP021>**

► **CRIME** (noun): In order to be consistent with the analysis of written language, the word *crime* is going to be considered incorrect when it is being exclusively used as a synonym of “murder.” There is only one example of this word in learners’ speech. It is found in LINDSEI and it is not clear if the student here is thinking about a murder or if s/he is thinking about all types of crime. I finally decided to consider it as correct.

✓ (401) **<B> I know . yeah . and also in Mexico . well we have lots of friends there that have worked with my mother they have . afterwards they went to live there </B>  
<A> (mhm) </A>  
<B> that they want to come back to Spain . they say it's horrible . that there it's really horrible . because (mm) you can't have your children free and . and then . with the tranquillity that nothing's going to happen </B>  
<A> (mm) </A>  
<B> there's so much *crime* and so much . (em) so many kidnappings and things like that </B><LINDSEI\_SP006>**

► **EMBARRASSED** (adjective): As regards the use of the adjective *embarrassed*, the speaker is actually referring to “an embarrassed father,” thus, to the emotional state of being “ashamed.” This fact leads us to conclude that the student here knows the English word and its corresponding meaning.

✓ (402) **I think the boy .. the second boy is going to: . go down stairs . and the: . well . maybe . he will be: .. hurted by by the father <A> <laugh> well <laugh> really it wasn't like I think . e:h . the: father looks now . eh some .. *embarrassed* I don't know . e:h the boy . is . quite taller than the father (SULEC-SP-IL-DOCUMENT 578)**

✓ (403) **<B> so . I didn't talk too much . cos I went to a bar and I wasn't .. I couldn't ask for a beer or something cos I was (eh) *embarrassed* but .. <clears throat> . I like very much how . how French sounds . but . (eh) I . I . I don't think I pronounce it very well <overlap /> so </B><LINDSEI\_SP015>**

► **ESTATE** (noun):<sup>64</sup> In the analysis of *estate*, I trust the written transcript of the student’s oral performance. Accordingly, learners tend to use the word *estate* instead of *state*. However, it is not clear if the misuse of this word is due to an intralingual factor (synformy) or interlingual component (L1 transfer). Regardless of that, the confusion is

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<sup>64</sup> The corpora used do not provide direct access to the sound files; thus, I rely on the phonetic transcripts provided by the corpora compilers for the analysis of this word and for the analysis of spoken language in general.

obvious and the semantic properties of the English word have been altered; as a result, this example has been recorded in the column of inaccurate uses.

- \* (404) well this taxes come very well to the country to the community to the whole . society .. do you know . what I mean? <A> Hmm <C> What Estela means is . is that . that taxes increase the: the <x> of the *estate* the: the: public money <A> Aha <C> and well that money we don't know where where that money goes (SULEC-SP-AL-DOCUMENT 631)

► **EVENTUALLY** (adverb): There is only one example of *eventually* in LINDSEI. This word is correctly used in the sense of “finally, in the end.”

- ✓ (405)<A> *eventually* what kind of job would you like then </A> <B> no I don't like teaching to children because I think they hum the . schools and colleges here in Spain . children well children they are they are . older peop= (eh) they think I think they are very conflictive people and . I can't stand them I . I don't like them </B><LINDSEI\_SP026>

► **FACILITY** (noun): The corresponding plural form of this noun *facilities* is found in LINDSEI in a context where the word “opportunities” would be probably preferred by a native speaker. Therefore, the use of this word is considered to be inaccurate.

- \* (406)<A> (mhm) do you think Europe has a lot to offer as in films </A> [...]<B> yeah no there's a lot of creativity now in . that's it here in in Europe there are (mm) better ideas but we don't have the[i:] the[i:] *facilities* and the yes . they have the money they have (er) special effects and all that they have good stories also they have . best movies of history they are they are American but but Europe . Europe they have good good ideas </B><LINDSEI\_SP049>

► **FIGURE** (noun): No problems in the learners' use of this partial false friend have been attested in SULEC or LINDSEI, except for example 408 where the word *figure* might be misinterpreted. The noun *role* would be more suitable in this context.

- ✓ (407) <B> (em) . first of all the hairdo she has . (em) because in . the actual lady . it's kind of straight . and the other one is like I think she's been to the hairdressers and have her hair done . then (em) the dress is pretty much the same but it's kind of different .. yeah the the figure of the lady is pretty much the same the only thing that's different it's the face that's really different . and specially the nose . cos the . real lady had like another big nose </B><LINDSEI\_SP007>
- \* (408) I don't like thi:s . thi:s er culture . because I consider this culture very sexist</B> <A>uhu</A> <B>with the woman</B> <A>uhu</A> <B>er since er the:y . don't respect the *figure* the fut= the *figure* of the: the woman *figure* (SULEC-SP-IL- DOCUMENT 1134/1135)

► **FINE** (adj): This adjective is used in the sense of “okay; satisfactory.” This high-frequency adjective is correctly used by learners both in SULEC and LINDSEI.

- ✓ (409) Greenwich is *fine* eh eh is just nest to: . to the campus it's only . ten minutes . walk and . and *fine* I I stayed there the . the second term and the
- ✓ (410)<B> just not to get her upset but I think of course they'll . it's obvious that . the one on the picture is not her so probably the . three of them are just thinking . if you're happy with that picture . that's *fine* but that's not you </B><LINDSEI\_SP021>

► **FIRM** (noun): According to the data in LINDSEI, the English noun *firm* is used by learners when referring to a small company; thus, this word is used in the right sense.

- ✓ (411) <A> so what job would you like to do </A><B> work in an officin or another I a . oh an officin I have said . office or I don't know probably .. in a big . *firm* or something like that . a REPSOL or something like that and go abroad all my life cos I hate Spain I have seen it (eh) all <overlap /> <LINDSEI\_SP026>

There is another instance of *firm* in LINDSEI but it is a slip of the tongue that is corrected by the speaker on the spot. This example has not been counted in the analysis.

► **LARGE** (adjective): The English adjective *large* can collocate with nose and legs. As a matter of fact, legs can be either large (=big; for instance, she has large legs from water retention) or long and someone can have a large nose (big) or a long nose. For this reason, example number 412 below is included in the column of accurate uses.

- ✓ (412) she seems she wi:ll sat . on the floor .. e:h with the other . guys .. a:nd .. she: she has blond hair .. she has a *large* . nose . e:h . she has fair skin (SULEC-SP-AL- DOCUMENT 575)

However, the learners' confusion of *long* with *large* seems to be quite frequent and is made evident both in SULEC when the student is not sure whether she should use *long* or *large*, and she finally chooses *large*; this is also made obvious in LINDSEI when the learner uses *large* instead of “big.” Perhaps the mother tongue played a role in the recourse to *large*, especially in example 413.

- ✗ (413) the: Chinese who is playing the guitar .. and this and this one is: .. also wearing a shirt and . I can't see nothing . nothing more .. this one is wearing: a shirt .. he looks tall . her legs are . are long are *large* . e:h .. he has a: trousers . well . short trousers (SULEC-SP-AL- DOCUMENT 573)
- ✗ (414) <B> eating so (em) having breakfast so early and then for the lunch they don't have such a *large* meals like here </B><LINDSEI\_SP032>

► **LIBRARY** (noun): The spoken text in which this noun occurs in SULEC is quite revealing for this study. Speaker D is being corrected by the other speaker who reminds D of the fact that *library* is not the same as a “bookshop.” They are referring to the false friendship phenomenon and makes the confusion explicit when they say “*Libraries don’t sell books! at least they shouldn’t heh heh heh*, <C> *We discussed a few minutes ago.*” It is remarkable how even when they know that *library* is not a “bookshop” they fall into the trap and use it. This might indicate that the cognitive association between *library* and *librería* is really strong and difficult to overcome. Then, the speaker corrects himself (this is also supported by the interviewers’ remark <A> “these are bookshops”); then the student tries to solve the problem, changes the perspective of the topic and talks about university libraries.

- ✱ /√ (415) [...] what do you think about the idea of censorship? and particularly the idea of . not allowing certain books in *libraries* [...] What do you mean? repeat what you’ve said <D> OK hmm for ex= for example in Spains many *libraries* were are sol= solding books o:n . whose . authors ['autəs] are English people <B> **LIBRARIES DON’T SELL BOOKS!** at least they shouldn’t heh heh heh <A> These are bookshops <C> We discussed a few minutes ago we were <xx> *library* no . yes *library* book shop is [where <B> [Aha OK so bookshop OK <C> Heh heh heh <D> OK hmm .. for example i:n .. i:n *libraries* o:f hmm universities of faculties o:f . any philology a:s . Germany o:r Latin <B> German aha <D> Or English *libraries* . we are found English books or Germans books a:nd that in other publics or school *library* .. we don’t found these books <B> We can’t find <D> A:nd .. I think [it’s <B> [Is that good or bad? <D> Is is wrong [because <B> [OK why? <D> Many peoples like to: read .. English or Germany or another <B> [German [...]<B> Well OK she’s saying that we can’t find German language books in the *library* . OK? and the issue is censorship . OK? Is it because somebody actively chose to prohibit those books from appearing in the *library* o:r or is it merely because of . you know financial reasons? The function is always so vague and you can’t buy every in the: you know . under the sun <C> .. hmm .. we:ll .. heh heh .. well I: ... well she said . we have for example no: German books i:n no? <referring to student D> <B> I don’t know . ask her <C> Ah OK heh heh <B> Yeah talk to her heh <C> We have no German books . i:n our *libraries* because we have no money or because . someone .. says I don’t like German and I don’t allow to: don’t allow you to: .. ca:n .. read something in German (SULEC-SP-AL-DOCUMENT 635/636)

Learners in LINDSEI have no problems with the word *library* as shown in examples 416 and 417 below

- ✓ (416) <B> because it's not the same the teacher says you have to prepare this topic and you go to the *library* open books . you look at . many many many books [...]</B><LINDSEI\_SP010>

- ✓ (417) <B> I al= I always study here in the *library* with <name of person> </B><LINDSEI\_SP019>

► **MAYOR** (noun): The word *mayor* occurs 3 times in the phrase *Plaza Mayor* so it is not registered in the results.

► **NOTES** (noun): This plural noun occurs in LINDSEI and is correctly used to refer to the information students write down during a lesson.

- ✓ (418) <B> here is like . the teacher comes . you listen to him or to her you take *notes* and nothing . only . you speak . if the teacher ask you </B><LINDSEI\_SP010>

► **NOTICE** (verb): Examples of spoken language containing this verb respect the original English meaning as observed in the examples below.

- ✓ (419) if I say London I'm referring to any e:h . cosmopolitan city .. in in this kind of places . even if if if you wear . smart e:h suits . eh people *notice* it . people *notice* you . but if you wear eh if you're . badly . between inverted commas . badly dressed . nobody pays attention to you (SULEC-SP-AL-DOCUMENT 539)
- ✓ (420) the .. his father has: . has *noticed* that he: he's crying (SULEC-SP-AL-DOCUMENT 552)
- ✓ (421) <B> well . there are some differences according to what I *noticed* . between being a student here and being a student there . there you are more . you participate more . <overlap /> in the classes </B><LINDSEI\_SP010>
- ✓ (422) <B> <clears throat> or maybe not maybe they .. they *notice* that .. she is . like . she is as lying or </B><LINDSEI\_SP010>

► **OFFICE** (noun): The noun *office* is not confused with Spanish *oficio*, and even intermediate students know the meaning of this word, as shown in the spoken production of English learners.

- ✓ (423) can travel and to can live .. a:nd eh other people prefers . to job in a: bar or in an *office* . and if . if they: . have abilities . to do: these things .. they have to: .. to use . them (SULEC-SP-IL- DOCUMENT 555)
- ✓ (424) mm I think mm . all these people is: i:n .. mm .. I don't know .. there is a tree a:nd .. there is like an . a building a an *office* o:r something (SULEC-SP-IL- DOCUMENT 575)
- ✓ (425) <B> it's just . it it looks like she is in the painter ho= in the painter's house or the painter's *office* because all the table and th= (mm) in behind is full of . of: . ah I forget the name this with you pain= you paint <overlap /> with </B><A> <overlap /> brushes </A><LINDSEI\_SP037>

► **PAPER** (noun): The problem of this word arises from the fact that learners tend to make this noun countable by adding an –s for the plural (e.g. *papers*) and, as a consequence of that, this word acquires a different sense in English. It is not the same thing to say that something is written on “a paper” than to say it is written on “a piece of paper.” If you are referring to the material and you add –s to make it plural, you are changing the meaning of what you are saying. The two examples below show this problem.

- \* (426) what what's the thing that . they're going to like or . so: . you break your mind and you don't know what what to do . but .. a: some other times . they: ask you the: things o:r some certain things . o:r they give you a *paper* (SULEC-SP-AL- DOCUMENT 536)
- \* (427) sitting on the floor eh playing a guitar . with .. eh . maybe a .. Spanish guitar <laugh> .. playing flamenco <laugh> he seems he seems . maybe I I don't . his features . could be a Spanish . a Spanish guy .. mm he's a little bald .. eh <B> what else has he got with him? <A> .. eh has a bottle of water of . mineral water .. e:h .. the mm mm .. the cover of of for the guitar .. mmm .. and *papers* on . the floor .. by him (SULEC-SP-AL- DOCUMENT 545)
- \* (428) <B> and flowers everywhere <X> green and grass and very very clean </B> <A> (mhm) </A><B> you you couldn't see a: a *paper* on the: </B> <A> (mhm) </A> <B> on the street . like here for example </B><LINDSEI\_SP031>

Under the influence of the all-purpose Spanish word *papel*, English *paper* is used to refer to a marriage agreement, a wallpaper and to a sheet of music paper.

- \* (429) I tried to: play .. I had to: .. to use a: . a cloth to .. to clean <B> so you you are not very much in . in music . in playing instruments? <A> no I .. sometimes .. with e:h . by: ear .. without e:h .. without . the score? no score .. without having the: *papers* (SULEC-SP-AL- DOCUMENT 562)
- \* (430) the house has a: .. a: .. a *paper* . covering the wall . and with big flowers and . the and . dots .. lines of dots a:nd . i:n .. in the house there is a . carpet covering all the: .. all the floor (SULEC-SP-AL- DOCUMENT 583)
- \* (431) marry is only for people who is Catholic o:r religious but erm the *paper* erm it's today more important not the: . the religious or the civil</C> (SULEC-SP-IL- DOCUMENT 1134/1135)

In contrast to this, *paper* is also used to refer to a “newspaper” and to the “material” as illustrated in examples 432 and 433 below.

- ✓ (432) he's reading . something . probably a: . magazine or a: .. *paper* or something . similar .. (SULEC-SP-AL- DOCUMENT 542)
- ✓ (433) <B> and we have to keep the food for animals . for example we have to separate . the .. the food . from the . plastic . or from the *paper* . and </B><LINDSEI\_SP016>



► **PARENTS** (noun): There is no evidence that Spanish learners use the word *parents* to mean “relatives.” In fact, semantic links between this word and nouns, such as father, mother or parents, grandparents and relatives in learners’ speech support the hypothesis that this noun has been accurately acquired. The absence of difficulties in the use of this word might well be explained by the nature of the English item itself (high-frequency English item) and the fact that this word is introduced at early stages of L2 teaching and learning.

- ✓ (434) do you look after her? </B> <A>yeah</A> <B>yeah? OK and . I mean . what do you think that will happen in the future talking about for example you:r *parents* . your father and your mother er when they are old or they are ill I mean in the future (SULEC-SP-AL- DOCUMENT 1080)
- ✓ (435) in August I: I have to go with my *parents* to: Zamora because my: my family my father’s family is there (SULEC-SP-IL- DOCUMENT 1285)
- ✓ (436) I like going to: mhm s= Sanxenxo’s beach . that is . quite near of my house and there are there is very: very big a:nd there are a lot of peoples I I go with my friends and my: relatives my *parents* my: grandfathers my grandmothers (SULEC-SP-IL-DOCUMENT 1288)
- ✓ (437) <A> (mhm) and (er) do you live with (er) other girls do you share a flat </A><B> no I live with my *parents* and my brother </B><LINDSEI\_SP039>
- ✓ (438)<B> (erm) the country that I have visited was (er) (er) this summer this last sat= this last summer . (erm) (mm) (mm) was France . because (er) my *parents* are working there . and: it was impressionant because (er) nobody . (er) my father my mother my sister and me nobody speak (er) speaks Fren= French </B><LINDSEI\_SP047>

► **PIPE** (noun): In English a *pipe* is a tube used to carry water or other fluid substances; a device for smoking tobacco or a wind instrument but in this last case, it is commonly used in the plural (the *pipes*; *bagpipes*). There is clear evidence that the learners’ use of this term is attributable to a compensation strategy. Learners are creatively using the L2 and trying out things with a view to filling in a gap of knowledge in their vocabulary. In fact, the learner explicitly acknowledges that he is saying something that is not correct but he is trying this word out just in case it works. In the end, as he thinks he is failing to communicate the intended meaning, he resorts to the Spanish word (language switch (Tarone, 1980; Dörnyei, 1995), that is, the learner is strategically using the mother tongue in order to make himself understood) and this is when we find out that he is referring to a *tambourine*, and not to a bagpipe as I initially thought.

- ✗ (439) and I don’t know the name in .. in English it’s a: Galician and Irish instrument it’s not a *pipe* <B> a *pipe*? <A> no is not a *pipe* a e:h it’s a: percussion instrument . it’s round and has e:h <B> has strings? like the guitar o:r <A> no has . u:h .. it’s eh .. OK .. cl- eh leather I think is the: ...

<B> it's made of leather? <A> yes I think it's the: the word .. it's e:h .. it's eh it's played wi:th the hand . and the other hand is e:h taking the instrument a:nd .. I don't know but in Spanish is pandereta <laugh> (SULEC-SP-AL- DOCUMENT 537)

There is another example which contains the word *pipe*, on this occasion this word is used for flute.

× (440) but then the the: teacher want wanted that I played the: .. gaita <laugh> and I don't like it a . a lot and I left <laugh> my lessons <B> you prefer the: tambor? <A> yes <laugh> <B> so now you don't play? <A> no I don't . play no <B> but you can? . I mean if .. if you wanted <A> yes some . some sings yes . <B>:: I can read . music .. yes <B> and the *pipe*? did you: . eh like .. did you learn to: play it? or you just didn't started? <A> the: .. yes I started . but <laugh> <B> you left it <A> yes .. i:n two months .. I left <B> it's too difficult? <A> not if it's like the: flute . the flute . bu:t . you have to: blow more (SULEC-SP-AL- DOCUMENT 563)

► **PLATE** (noun): The primary meaning of English *plate* is a kitchen utensil which is used for serving food or eating food from it. Whenever we talk about food cooked in a particular way, we must use the word “dish” in English. However, L2 learners use the noun *plate* to refer to a dish. This is due to the influence of the students' mother tongue as Spanish *plato* is a more comprehensive term and can refer to both the food (dish) and the receptacle where you put the food on, that is, a plate. The sentence “this is my favourite plate” uttered by a learner in her spoken production shows the influence of its Spanish counterpart.

× (441) how do you what is the typical dish? <B> with eggs and with pasta. I like the mhm.. with pasta. I like eating pasta with mushrooms because it's healthy and i like it very much. This is my favourite *plate* <teacher> ok. and you cook silvia? (SULEC-SP-AL- DOCUMENT 1092/1093)

The cultural influence of Spanish is also observed in the use of *plate*. In Spain, street artists and poor people use *plates* in order to collect money and *plate* is precisely used here to mean “the collecting plate.”

× (442) <B> and the guy who's playing the guitar . do you think he's asking for money? .. maybe because he has this . the case of the guitar <A> mm .. maybe I'm I'm I'm not sure <B> you are not sure? <A> .. no because I can't see anything . no money . in any .. in a *plate* <B> <xx> <A> <xx> yeah for pleasure for his own pleasure .. he seems to be alone (SULEC-SP-AL- DOCUMENT 545)

The phrase *number plate* is used by learners to refer to the “house number.” In an English context, it is normally linked to the world of cars rather than houses. Although

it can be understood from the context of the utterance, it is not likely that an English speaker would use it in this context. This is then included in the X column for inaccurate uses.

- × (443) what's on the door? <A> the: the door has a: .. a little . eh piece of .. I don't know e:h . it's a number the number *plate* . the number of the: . the house . a:nd . underneath you can see: . a: a pigeon hole I think (SULEC-SP-AL- DOCUMENT 547)

► **PRACTICE** (noun): Most examples of *practice* are correct in learners' spoken production.

- ✓ (444) So in your own right . how do you . put this theory into *practice*? (SULEC-SP-AL-DOCUMENT 633)
- ✓ (445) <B> so I think . there should be some . classes or conversation hours . with native people or non native but . to give you the opportunity to talk . in the first course there are some .. some courses of . conversation because (eh) you have an or= an oral exam </B><A> (mhm) </A><B> but . you don't do much ... and (eh) it wasn't . all the year </B><A> (mhm) </A><B> so you don't get much *practice* </B><LINDSEI\_SP047>

Nevertheless, the phrase \**my practice period* is a calque from Spanish *periodo de prácticas*, so it is regarded as incorrect.

- × (446) <A> do you work or </A><B> (eh) I was (eh) in my *practice* period in in the first and second year. no the second and this year </B><LINDSEI\_SP025>

► **PRACTISE** (verb): Students use this verb in the right contexts. This word occurs when talking about class work (e.g. *practise your English*), sports (e.g. *practise sports*) and religion (e.g. *practise Catholicism*). Perhaps we could raise objections to the collocations “practise dancing / ballet/ football” which could be rephrased in the following way: *practise dancing* could be simply “dance;” *practise ballet* might be changed into “do ballet” and *practise football* into “play football.” In any case, these three collocations are acceptable in English and they are regarded as such. In fact, they are counted as valid uses of the English verb *practise*.

- ✓ (447) we have some exercise some games . to *practise* all this names .. all this parts of the the body (SULEC-SP-AL-DOCUMENT 486)
- ✓ (448) boys can also *practise* dancing it's not a problem [...] when he was a child I mean did he plact= *practise* ballet?</C> <A>no my brother <laughs> *practised* football like most of them most of the: boys</A> <C>uhu no ballet</C> <everybody laughs> <A>he played in a: in a: ... erm in a: football team of of our village. (SULEC-SP-AL- DOCUMENT 1094/1095)

- ✓ (449) I'm Catholic but I don't *practise* at all (SULEC-SP-IL- DOCUMENT 1134/1135)
- ✓ (450) <B> it's a different country and different people and .. but (eh) I think . it's (em) a great experience .. because I learnt a lot of things I learnt . (eh) a lot of people .. and I visit a lot of countries .. and (eh) we went to: school . in in the mornings .. and then in the afternoon we: (eh) we *practised* sport . sports differen= basketball or football .. and (eh) in the afternoons we went . we went away . to have a drink </B><LINDSEI\_SP012>
- ✓ (451) <B> all .. all are Spanish people around . and . and I think . it would be a good chance to *practise* your English </B><LINDSEI\_SP009>

► **PRESUME** (verb): In spite of the fact that the context is not 100% clear, there are some clues that indicate that the student in SULEC is attaching the right meaning to the English verb, while the example of *presume* in LINDSEI is incorrect (*presume* is clearly used with the meaning of “to show off”)

- ✓ (452) well I think that: .. somebody is going to come e:h .. <B>:: *presume* is: . the: .. the son of the oth- of this man . who: .. who has e:h .. who was the one who: .. who hitted eh the: the child . who was crying at the beginning . now (SULEC-SP-AL- DOCUMENT 550)
- ✗ (453) <B> (er) she: . she in the picture is . is not very like like in . reality and in picture number four (erm) . (er) she's <starts laughing> she is <stops laughing> (erm) showing the picture (er) to: her friends and .. and (er) she *presumes* (er) .. (er) of about (er) about the the picture although she's not like in the: in the picture </B><LINDSEI\_SP036>

► **PRETEND** (verb): Examples of the verb *pretend* and its related forms: *pretends* in the present, *pretending* in the gerund and *pretended* in the past and past participle forms are found exclusively in LINDSEI. Learners are generally influenced by Spanish when they use this verb. Thus, the word *pretend* in example 454 clearly illustrates this claim.

- ✓ (454) <B> (erm) (eh) I: I'd like to talk about a film . which I I haven't liked at all . (eh) is I think the the the last film I've seen . lastly . and it's name is Resurrection I don't know if it's . heard about it </B><A> I haven't seen it . I've heard about it but I haven't seen it </A><B> (erm) . I recommend you not to see it <overlap /> <laughs> </B><A> <overlap /> <laughs> </A><B> because it . it is . is pretends to be . it *pretends* to be like similar to to Seven . have you have you seen it </B><A> Seven </A><LINDSEI\_SP011>

Nevertheless, there are some speakers who use *pretend* in its English sense (“act as if something is true when it is not”).

- ✓ (455) <B> well the: the monument was called Holocaust too </B><A> (mhm) </A><B> and it was like all . it was impressive it was like all . you could see all the people who died and . underneath you could see it was like like . sh= (mm) lines you you could walk on . on like it was lines of it looked it looked like . like metal something like that and you could see underneath

and it was like burning things it was they weren't burning for real but they pretended to be and it was very very impressive </B><LINDSEI\_SP037>

► **PROFESSOR** (noun): Learners use the English word *professor* to refer to a private teacher or to a highschool teacher. This is clearly influenced by the similar Spanish noun *profesor*, which denotes any teacher in general.

- \* (456) at least you try .. where do you attend lessons? <A> <B> at a particular .. professor <B> a private teacher? (SULEC-SP-IL-DOCUMENT 556)
- \* (457) <A> and (er) after your degree what would you like to do </A> <B> I would like to: .. to be a good professor </B><A> (mhm) an English teacher </A><LINDSEI\_SP044>

There are some other examples which may illustrate a correct use of this noun, as, for example, the one in 458 from LINDSEI.

- ✓ (458) <B> yeah an English teacher </B><B> I I've been there you know this program with Prof= with Professor <name of professor> in Manchester </B><LINDSEI\_SP045>

► **QUALIFICATIONS** (noun): The plural noun *qualifications* occurs in the sentence “my qualifications are a little low.” This seems to indicate that the learner is talking about her marks here. Thus, this example is included in the column of inaccurate uses.

- \* (459) <B> no it (er) I'm looking forward going to: may= maybe to Essex to the University Esse= of Essex . cos I've been told that it's very: hard university and I like <overlap /> to to prove s= I'd like to prove myself if I if I can . go through it </B> <A> <overlap /> oh yeah I <XXX> it's a good university it's a good university </A><B> yeah I've been told about it . I hope so </B><A> (mhm) </A><B> well I I know it <X> will be difficult of course </B><A> well try no </A><B> yeah but you know my: qualifications maybe are: a little low </B></S> <LINDSEI\_SP045>

► **QUIET** (adjective): There is a fifty-fifty split between accurate and inaccurate uses of this adjective. When it is applied to places, the use is regarded as correct. However, when Spanish learners refer to people as being *quiet*, the implication of being not only “silent” but also “motionless” appears to be present. The influence of Spanish *quieto* which means “still” is therefore perceived. This is illustrated in examples 461 and 462.

- ✓/X (460) the second one is: . is small . e:h .. thin .. eh rather thin . a:nd . he look eh bald .. more more bald than the other than the fat .. a:nd .. seems a . he he seems a: . eh small . the small one . he seems . eh .. mm .. mm . not at all violent . person . a very quiet man . and .. mm .. because eh .. eh beside eh his . hi: . his features e:h . the wallpaper . he . that there is in his . his hou-

his flat . is that is . the paper has flowers of .. has flowers so so . he seems a . quite man . tranquil .. and the other . the other . all the all the contrary . angry . tall fat .. mm .. and the boy is . is beside them there *quiet* (SULEC-SP-AL- DOCUMENT 554)

- × (461) <B> ... and: well the second one i= (er:) .. (er) he start again to make other: draw and and it's a portrait of that woman and she has to be: very *quiet* because it's not it's difficult to paint [...]<LINDSEI\_SP041>
- × (462) <B> (er) contin= (mm) continue .. (er) picture three . is the moment that he's painting her . and (er) she's very (er) *quiet* ... er is . she's very *quiet* and he's painting ... and it is and number two </B><LINDSEI\_SP047>
- ✓ (463) The sounds of the film have have very have *quiet* rhythm and.. er. Also i found that i was very romantic. I loved the <x> stories of love (SULEC-SP-AL- DOCUMENT 1092/1093)
- ✓ (464) (mm) yo= . your husband has painted you like that because . because . he wants you to . just to keep *quiet* and </B><A> <overlap /> <laughs> </A><B> <overlap /> not to shout at him .. and .. bu= b= and she doesn't (eh) really . believe it </B><LINDSEI\_SP011>

► **RARE** (adjective): The example of *rare* that we find in LINDSEI is semantically inaccurate. The speaker does not want to say that the situation does not occur very often, in fact, it does but that he thinks it is unusual, strange or surrealistic.

- × (465) <B> yes because (er) (er) . it's (er) very nice and . (er) I I can: I could sorry I . well I understand with (er:) with the with I understand (mm) (eh) <laughs> in France (er) . with there because I speak English because . </B><A> if not <XXX> </A><B> (uhu) and it's (er) very jo= it's like a joke because . I: go to France and <starts laughing> speak in English <stops laughing> it's: it's very *rare* </B><LINDSEI\_SP047>

► **REALISE** (verb): English *realise* and its related forms do not show any trace of transfer in the learners' production. Students seem to have a productive and receptive knowledge and command of this word (they know the concept and use of this word) as shown in the instances below.

- ✓ (466) [...] some friends of mine . from Santiago went to Wimbledon to: . to look for . for the courts . and they did not *realize* that Wimbledon even though it's . it's only a: .. you know a district . a little district . in London (SULEC-SP-AL- DOCUMENT 539)
- ✓ (467) <B> but I think . maybe she ha= (eh) .. ah look . I didn't realise . that she in this picture . she's very angry because . she shows herself like oh I'm ugly . you have to do it better . and . look . now she's very: happy because . the woman in the picture .. is very very nice as she thinks that she's . nice . but she isn't </B><LINDSEI\_SP019>

► **REGULAR** (adjective): There are some examples of this adjective in both databases. As regards LINDSEI, learners use this adjective as if it meant “so-so” in this corpus. Therefore, they transfer the Spanish meaning.

- \* (468) that's how I feel *regular* <overlap /> <laughs><B> <overlap /> <foreign> claro claro </foreign> yeah yeah yeah . and I think that teachers also are less (em) . strong or less hard with you because . you are a st= str= </B><A> foreigner </A><LINDSEI\_SP015>

In SULEC, this adjective is mostly used in connection with a linguistic issue, when students refer to the simple past and to the so-called *regular verbs*. This use is perfectly acceptable. On the other hand, there is one example where *regular* is linked to the word *exercise* in the collocation to “take regular exercise.” In either case, the meaning applied to the adjective *regular* is the right one so these examples are registered as correct.

- ✓ (469) there is a list of verbs *regular* verbs (SULEC-SP-AL-DOCUMENT 519)
- ✓ (470) even violent doctors says say that drinking alcohol in moderation can prevent coronary heart disease but in the other form we can say that if you have . if you take *regular* exercise and eating a healthy diet can also make a difference (SULEC-SP-AL-DOCUMENT 1096/1097)

► **SENSIBLE** (adjective): The adjective *sensible* occurs only once in SULEC and once in LINDSEI. The English concept and its sense of “rational/ reasonable” is perceived.

- ✓ (471) what do you think of you know those people who keep well dangerous animals at home? for example snakes big snakes you know? er .. do you think this is *sensible*? (SULEC-SP-IL- DOCUMENT 1285/1286)
- ✓ (472) <B> everyone used to say the same but . it's because (eh) in my opinion you . it's easier to have a a really *sensible* communication with (eh) . when they are older </B><A> (mhm) </A><B> that's my opinion . because when they are ten or twelve they only want to play and (er) they're always like running around the class <overlap /> and </B><LINDSEI\_SP025>

► **SOAP** (noun): The noun *soap* is confused and used instead of *soup*. This can be the result of an interlingual confusion. The Spanish word *sopa* misleads this student who uses *soap* with the meaning of “soup.”

- \* (473) do you think they belong to the same family?</B> <A>yeah</A> <B>uhu</B> <A>I think so .. a:nd ... eh I don't know we: . they can be: . brothers .. a:nd he can be he:= mm their: grandfather .. mm . they: .. are having a .. *soap*<?> (SULEC-SP-AL- DOCUMENT 1080)

In most examples, *soap* occurs in the informal phrase “soap opera.” It refers to those drama serials on TV which are very popular in South America. The phrase and its meaning are correct.

- ✓ (474) Yeah I don't know i:f you you know the *soap* opera Charmed ['tʃa:med] i:n you know? i:n <A> Yeah . I know it's an American tv series! <A> (SULEC-SP-AL- DOCUMENT 597)

► **STAMP** (noun): The word *stamp* occurs in an oral presentation where students are reflecting upon language. Learners are talking about how to make the plural. It is here where the noun *stamp* and its plural form *stamps* appear. There is no clear evidence that this student is thinking about a printed image (*estampa* in Spanish) or about “postage stamps” due to the ambiguity of the context. However, as we have no reason to think that the use of this word is influenced by Spanish, it has been included in the column of positive results.

- ✓ (475) we make distinctions between countable and uncountable nouns. we have the difference between some milk in singular and plural and a *stamp* and some *stamps* in singular and in plural ... we make clear also what uncountable nouns are (SULEC-SP-AL- DOCUMENT 512)

► **STRANGER** (noun): In English, *stranger* is a noun that denotes someone that you do not know. However, learners use this noun as if it were a synonym of “foreigner” in their spoken production. The Spanish adjective *extranjero* (“foreigner”) could have influenced the use of *stranger* in examples 476 and 477.

- \* (476) <B> and then we . visited many places . we went to Dublin to ... I don't know to <name of city> to <name of city> to </B><A> <overlap /> yeah <indistinct voice> to me <laughs> </A><B> <overlap /> and . yeah . I suppose it's what everyone does to take the . *stranger* to the . most common places to </B><LINDSEI\_SP008>
- \* (477)<B> (er:) I think it's a fallacy that they are: (er:) you know very: that they are not (er) nice (mm) (er) there there are of course (er) not nice people like in everywhere because here in Spain (er:) there are also (mm) people which are not nice but (er) I maybe I was lucky when I went there and: because I met almost: (er) everyone . I met was quite nice to me or maybe because I was *stranger* or so </B><LINDSEI\_SP035>

Nonetheless, there are two examples in LINDSEI which seem to convey the English meaning of this word, thereby, referring to someone you do not know. This following example is one of those.

- ✓ (478) <laughs> do you think she would've told him otherwise . if . he was a perfect *stranger* . that she didn't like what he painted<LINDSEI\_SP012>



► **SUCCESS** (noun): The noun *success* is accurately used in both SULEC and LINDSEI. The learners who use this term are acquainted with both the meaning and the actual use of this lexical item.

- ✓ (479) <B> Yeah .. more people become become smoker so if we .. if we: .. can avoid [ə'boId] that young young people become smoker people [that would be <A> [Smokers <B> Smokers sorry . that would be a . a *success* I think .. and well if we have the examples [Ik'sampels] the example [Ik'sampel] in the countries ['kauntrIs] such as . England where . there are less people less smokers well why cannot to: imitate . tha:t .. that system no? (SULEC-SP-AL- DOCUMENT 631/632)
- ✓ (480) <B> and: on the other hand the husband . has a very . is very lucky because he keeps the the picture . he first draw of her . and .. and he . he is sells it .. and it has got a lot of *success*[...]<LINDSEI\_SP011>

► **SUPPORT** (verb): According to the spoken data provided by SULEC, the English verb *support* seems to have been appropriately acquired by Spanish learners. This verb and its corresponding noun are used in the correct sense of “help” or in the sense of “technical support,” as seen below.

- ✓ (481) will you be *supporting* the Spanish national team</A> <B>I don't think the the er Spanish team gonna do anything but . they try so: . that's fine (SULEC-SP-IL- DOCUMENT 1284)
- ✓ (482) We have chosen two exercises eh which are based in visual which has which have eh visual visual *supports* because we think that its better for them to have an image (SULEC-SP-AL- DOCUMENT 522)

► **TAP** (noun): *Tap* is a British word for American “faucet,” that is to say, it is a “device used to control the flow of water from a water pipe.” As the learner is using words such as bathroom, shower, wash in its co-text, the use of *tap* is considered to be correct.

- ✓ (483) in Spain . you go to a bar or to a pub in and the bathroom . is very . e:h .. it's not clean . but in a house . it's it's it's clean it's <B> and also I don't I have never been in Ireland . I have been in England . but there they have . the bathroom . like the: bath but they don't have a shower .. no: <laugh> and then there is like a plastic shower that you can put in the: . *tap* .. and they use that . well when they have that because they don't always have that <laugh> <A> ah! <laugh> ah! . I eh once heard .. that eh the queen of England e:h . washed .. herself .. e:h twelve times . a year . one per month .. (SULEC-SP-AL- DOCUMENT 537)

► **TOPIC** (noun):<sup>65</sup> The word *topic* does not pose big problems either in SULEC or LINDSEI. Spanish learners are using it when referring to a subject of discussion.

- ✓ (484) and . well going on with the *topic* of jobs er what kind of job would you like to have in the future? (SULEC-SP-AL- DOCUMENT 1078)
- ✓ (485) <B> (mhm) <coughs> okay I've chosen . *topic* three I: I saw a film called (er) <foreign> Y Tu Mamá También </foreign> but I don't know the translation . in English </B><LINDSEI\_SP039>

In spite of this, if we pay careful attention to the nuances of meaning assigned to this word, there is only one sample sentence where the meaning seems to be tinged with the idea of “cliché,” which, in fact, is the meaning that the Spanish word *tópico* has.

- ✗ (486) appear in in this interview but it's useful to know the difference between these verbs .. a:nd and to: to end it we: we should . we should er ask them about the *topics* Nick Hornby talks er about like for example the the issue of hero guilt which is something quite frequent appears quite frequent when talking about the British society and also about er class concerns as er as he says in his book <xx> write (SULEC-SP-AL- DOCUMENT 1102)

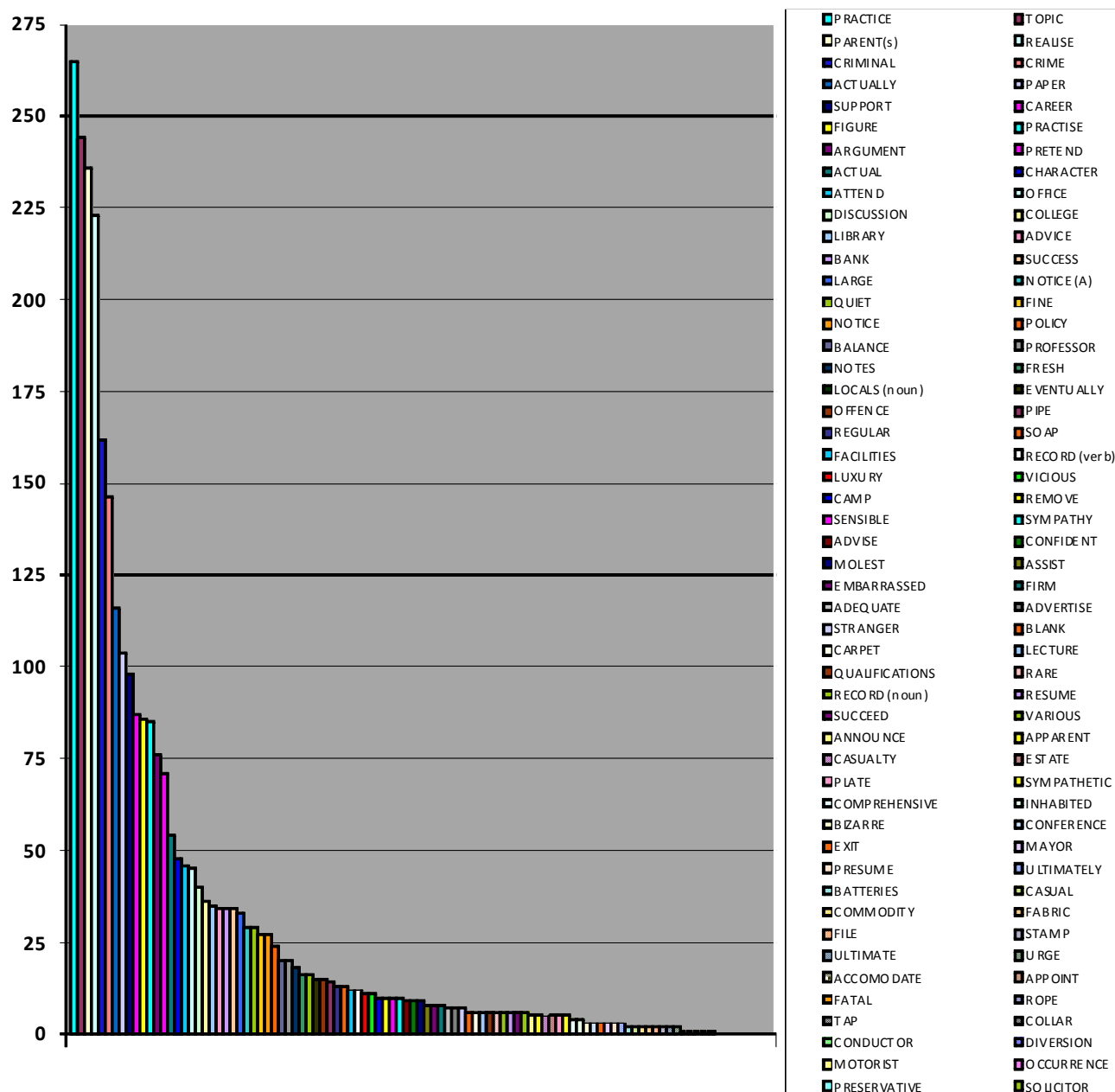
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<sup>65</sup> For the analysis of *topic*, I have not recorded those examples uttered by teachers (SULEC: 19-5=14; LINDSEI 90-67=23). At the beginning of the recordings, teachers tend to ask learners something to break the ice and this entails asking questions such as *what topics have you prepared?*; *what topics have you chosen for today* . *Carlos?*, etc. On the other hand, it is necessary to point out that this may have an influence on the learners' production since teachers' model can have an effect on the use of this word in the conversation.

### 3.7. General Discussion of Results

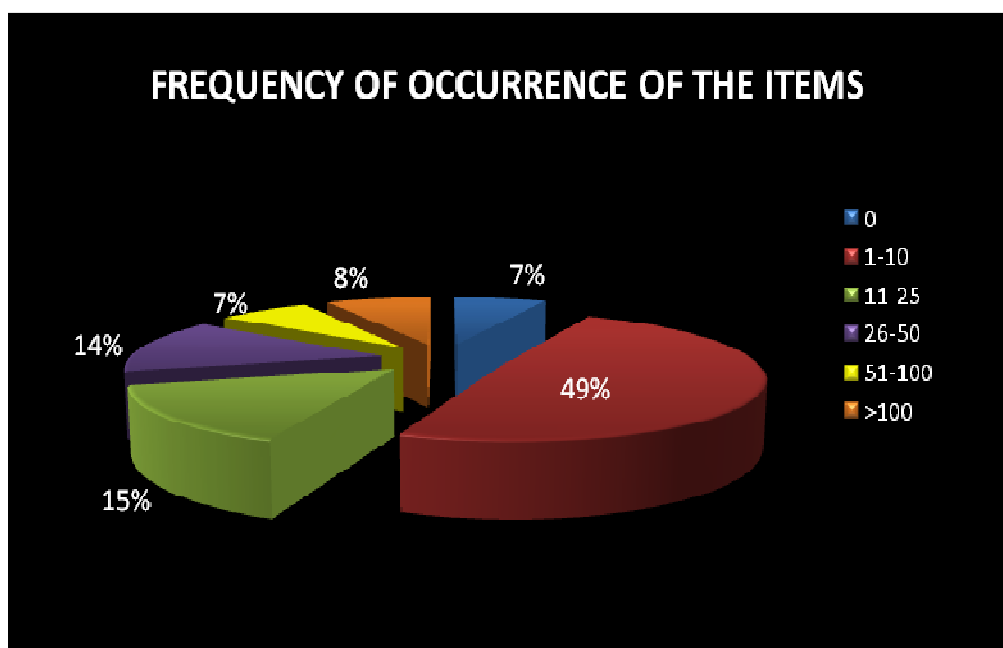
#### 3.7.1. Quantitative Results

This section will present a summary of the main findings drawn from the analysis of learner language. These results will reveal whether L2 learners use false friends or not in their interlanguage; in case they use these lexical items, how well students use them in their written and spoken communication. The sheer fact of analysing the frequency of occurrence of these 100 FF in both corpora gives us an indication of the importance of this particular phenomenon in learner language. After determining how many times learners resort to these false friends, I will calculate the proportion of accurate and inaccurate uses of these lexical items taking the overall figures into account. These two aspects will definitely tell us if false friends are recurrent in the interlanguage of Spanish learners and, most importantly, if they are a problem for learners. But before going into the actual figures and results, it seems necessary to give a general overview of which of those 100 false friends are most frequently used by learners in the corpora. As seen in Figure 11 representing the number of examples per false friend, there seems to be an unbalance in the set of data concerning the 100 items analysed. The length of the coloured bars gives us an idea of the amount of samples per lexical item; the words are organised according to their frequency in the corpora, thus, moving from the most commonly used to the least frequent. As shown by the data from the three corpora (SULEC, ICLE and LINDSEI), some of these items are better represented than others; some of them reach up to 260 occurrences, while others show no occurrences at all in the corpora. The longest coloured bars correspond to nouns, such as *practice*, *topic*, *parents*, *criminal*, *crime* and the verb *realise*, while the shortest ones go for English words such as *collar*, *conductor*, *diversion*, *motorist*, *preservative* or *solicitor*, which are not present in the corpora. The fact that these items are not in the corpora might indicate that learners do not know them, or that they do not really need to use them; some of these words are quite specific and linked to particular contexts (e.g. *collar* is used in the field of clothing, *diversion*, *motorist* and *conductor* are specific to the field of motor vehicles; or *occurrence*, *preservative* and *solicitor* are linked to happenings, food packages and legal activities, respectively) and it is likely that the nature of the topics students should write or speak about does not favour or prompt the use of such words. In any case, the frequency of occurrence of these items is represented in the next figure.

**FIGURE 11: Raw Frequency of Items**

If we look at the distribution of the items according to their frequency of occurrence in the corpora, we can distinguish six main tendencies: 1) items with more than 100 occurrences, 2) items with a rate in between 51 and 100 occurrences, 3) another group of items which occur 26 to 50 times, 4) a set of items which turn up between 11 and 25 times and 5) items which occur in between 1 and 10 times and, finally, 6) some items which do not occur at all. The pie chart below shows the percentage of false friends and their representation in the corpora according to these six

main identifiable tendencies or frequency bands. According to the data obtained from the three databases, almost half of the false friends analysed (49 per cent) are used at least between 1 and 10 times in the corpora, this is followed by 36 per cent of the items which appear in between 11 and 100 sample sentences (15 per cent of the items occur from 11 to 25 times in the corpora; 14 per cent of the items occur from 26 to 50; 7 per cent of the items occur from 51 to 100 times). Unfortunately, 7 per cent of the tokens do not occur in any of the two corpora.<sup>66</sup> This means that if we want to draw conclusions on how these lexical items are used by Spanish learners of English, we should compensate for this lack of data. In fact, as these lexical items are not found in the production of Spanish learners, they will be analysed in some of the receptive tasks of the questionnaire in the second study (see chapter 4, pp. 309, 334-335). In contrast to this, there are some other words which oppose this underrepresentation. In fact, 8 per cent of these items are used in more than 100 sample sentences. The pie chart below (Figure 12) illustrates the percentage of false friends and their representation in the corpora according to these six main tendencies described above.



**FIGURE 12:** Item Distribution according to Frequency

<sup>66</sup> This is one consequence of making a selection of false friends prior to the corpus analysis but I understand that building a list of false friends before the corpus analysis has more advantages than disadvantages. On the one hand, it gives you a more straightforward direction to achieve the aim you are pursuing; you are focusing on important false friends which are high-frequency items in English and which students can encounter in everyday situations. Likewise, the fact that they do not appear in the corpora is revealing. On the one hand, it can tell us that the scope, the topics and the nature of these learner corpora are not the most suitable ones for these words to occur; or that students avoid using these words, precisely because they are difficult or problematic.

At this point, it is important to detail the exact figures concerning the total amount of samples per false friend (frequency), the number of inaccurate and the number of accurate uses in the three corpora (ICLE, LINDSEI and SULEC) and in both modes of communication (spoken and written). Table 20 below aims at summarising the results that have been previously shown in a separate way (remember section 3.6 on *Data Analysis*).

WRITTEN/SPOKEN DATA	RAW FREQUENCY	✖	✓	% of ✖	% of ✓
				Inaccuracy	Accuracy
ACCOMODATE	1	1	0	100	0
ACTUAL	54	38	16	70,4	29,6
ACTUALLY	116	44	72	37,9	62,1
ADEQUATE	7	5	2	71,4	28,6
ADVERTISE	7	2	5	28,6	71,4
ADVICE	34	4	30	11,8	88,2
ADVISE	9	2	7	22,2	77,8
ANNOUNCE	5	2	3	40	60
APPARENT	5	0	5	0	100
APPOINT	1	1	0	100	0
ARGUMENT	76	39	37	51,3	48,7
ASSIST	8	7	1	87,5	12,5
ATTEND	46	12	34	26,1	73,9
BALANCE	20	1	19	5	95
BANK	34	1	33	2,9	97,1
BATTERIES	2	0	2	0	100
BIZARRE	3	0	3	0	100
BLANK	6	0	6	0	100
CAMP	10	0	10	0	100
CAREER	87	83	4	95,4	4,6
CARPET	6	0	6	0	100
CASUAL	2	2	0	100	0
CASUALTY	5	2	3	40	60
CHARACTER	48	9	39	18,8	81,3
COLLAR	0	0	0	0	0
COLLEGE	36	1	35	2,8	97,2
COMMODITY	2	2	0	100	0
COMPREHENSIVE	4	4	0	100	0
CONDUCTOR	0	0	0	0	0
CONFERENCE	3	2	1	66,7	33,3
CONFIDENT	9	0	9	0	100
CRIME	146	2	144	1,4	98,6

CRIMINAL	162	9	153	5,6	94,4
DISCUSSION	40	1	39	2,5	97,5
DIVERSION	0	0	0	0	0
EMBARRASSED	8	0	8	0	100
ESTATE	5	2	3	40	60
EVENTUALLY	15	1	14	6,7	93,3
EXIT	3	1	2	33,3	66,7
FABRIC	2	2	0	100	0
FACILITIES	12	8	4	66,7	33,3
FATAL	1	0	1	0	100
FIGURE	86	13	73	15,1	84,9
FILE	2	0	2	0	100
FINE	27	0	27	0	100
FIRM	8	0	8	0	100
FRESH	16	0	16	0	100
INHABITED	4	2	2	50	50
LARGE	33	17	16	51,5	48,5
LECTURE	6	4	2	66,7	33,3
LIBRARY	35	7	28	20	80
LOCALS (noun)	16	16	0	100	0
LUXURY	11	0	11	0	100
MAYOR	3	1	2	33,3	66,7
MOLEST	9	9	0	100	0
MOTORIST	0	0	0	0	0
NOTES	18	15	3	83,3	16,7
NOTICE	27	12	15	44,4	55,6
NOTICE (A)	29	1	28	3,4	96,6
OCCURRENCE	0	0	0	0	0
OFFENCE	15	1	14	6,7	93,3
OFFICE	45	0	45	0	100
PAPER	104	22	82	21,2	78,8
PARENT(s)	236	0	236	0	100
PIPE	14	11	3	78,6	21,4
PLATE	5	5	0	100	0
POLICY	24	3	21	12,5	87,5
PRACTICE	265	78	187	29,4	70,6
PRACTISE	85	19	66	22,4	77,6
PRESERVATIVE	0	0	0	0	0
PRESUME	3	2	1	66,7	33,3
PRETEND	71	22	49	31,0	69,0
PROFESSOR	20	13	7	65,0	35,0

QUALIFICATIONS	6	3	3	50	50
QUIET	29	17	12	58,6	41,4
RARE	6	3	3	50	50
REALISE	223	17	206	7,6	92,4
RECORD (noun)	6	0	6	0	100
RECORD (verb)	12	0	12	0	100
REGULAR	13	1	12	7,7	92,3
REMOVE	10	1	9	10	90
RESUME	6	6	0	100	0
ROPE	1	0	1	0	100
SENSIBLE	10	5	5	50	50
SOAP	13	1	12	7,7	92,3
SOLICITOR	0	0	0	0	0
STAMP	2	0	2	0	100
STRANGER	7	4	3	57,1	42,9
SUCCEED	6	0	6	0	100
SUCCESS	34	2	32	5,9	94,1
SUPPORT	98	28	70	28,6	71,4
SYMPATHETIC	5	0	5	0	100
SYMPATHY	10	3	7	30	70
TAP	1	0	1	0	100
TOPIC	244	2	242	0,8	99,2
ULTIMATE	2	0	2	0	100
ULTIMATELY	3	2	1	66,7	33,3
URGE	2	0	2	0	100
VARIOUS	6	2	4	33,3	66,7
VICIOUS	11	6	5	54,5	45,5
TOTAL	3025	668	2357	22,1	77,9

**TABLE 20:** Overall data (Written and Spoken):

Raw Frequencies and Percentages of Inaccurate and Accurate Uses

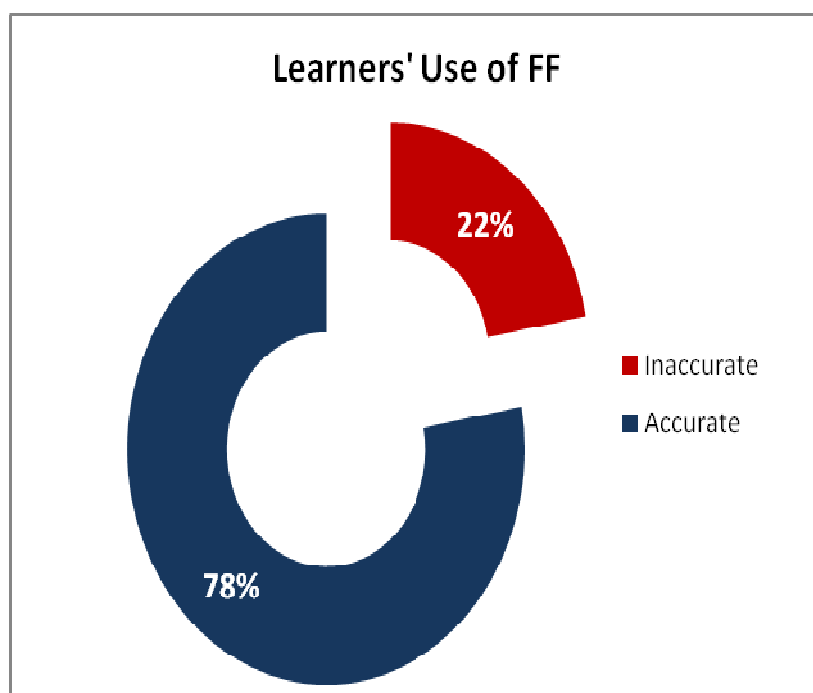
Table 20 shows the results obtained in the analyses of the three learner corpora. However, in order to calculate the amount of false friends that learners use in their productions, it seems useful to consider the total number of words in the three corpora and look at the amount of false friends per 10,000 words (Table 21).



WRITTEN/SPOKEN DATA ( 756,279 words)	FREQUENCY	✕	✓	Frequency per 10,000 words	✕ per 10,000	✓ per 10,000	% of ✕	% of ✓
FALSE FRIENDS	3025	668	2357	40,0	8,8	31,2	22,1	77,9

**TABLE 21:** Overall Results: General Frequencies and Percentages

Table 21 reveals that in the 756,279 words analysed, there are over 3000 examples of the 100 FF analysed. According to this, it is possible to maintain that there are 40 of those 100 false friends in 10,000 words. Out of those, 22.1 per cent exhibit a high degree of semantic inaccuracy due to the influence of the learners' mother tongue, while 77.9 per cent of them do not show any traces of semantic transfer. In a general sense, the number of false friends which are accurately used is higher than the number of FF whose use is not totally accurate. Nonetheless, the influence of the students' mother tongue is perceived in 22 per cent of those items. These data tell us that high-frequency false friends pose serious problems that we have to address in EFL classrooms. Thus, high-frequency words such as *casual*, *locals*, *career*, *actual*, *notice* or *quiet* (among others) are frequently misused by learners in both spoken and written language. It is also worthy of note that mistakes with FF still persist in learner language even when students could have previously found these words in English, that is, they still occur in the productive use of English of advanced students.

**FIGURE 13:** Accurate and Inaccurate Use of in Written and Spoken Language

The previous graph (Figure 13) provides us with a general overview of the results considering both written and spoken communication. It is also interesting to compare results in the three corpora and in both modes of communication. First, I will try to examine how many of those false friends are represented in written communication and within written communication, how many of them are found in SULEC and how many, in ICLE; after comparing the results in these written databases, I will focus on the results concerning spoken language where I will consider if there are any remarkable differences in the data provided by the spoken component of SULEC and LINDSEI. After discussing the results for written and spoken production separately, we will compare the use of FF in both modes of communication, placing special emphasis on the main differences between written and spoken production. This close analysis of the results will allow us to see if there are differences in the use of false friends across the different corpora considered and between the two modes of communication: speech and writing.

If we pay attention to the **written production** of Spanish learners of English, we observe that the figures almost replicate the overall results for both written and spoken language illustrated in Table 20 above. In fact, the total amount of accurate and inaccurate uses with respect to the total number of occurrences are very similar (23 per cent against 77 per cent in written language vs. 22 per cent and 78 in the overall results), and the degree of semantic accuracy exceeds the degree of semantic inaccuracy in both cases. Table 22 shows the number of false friends in written language, the number of wrong and right uses and the percentage of inaccuracy and accuracy found in learners' writings.

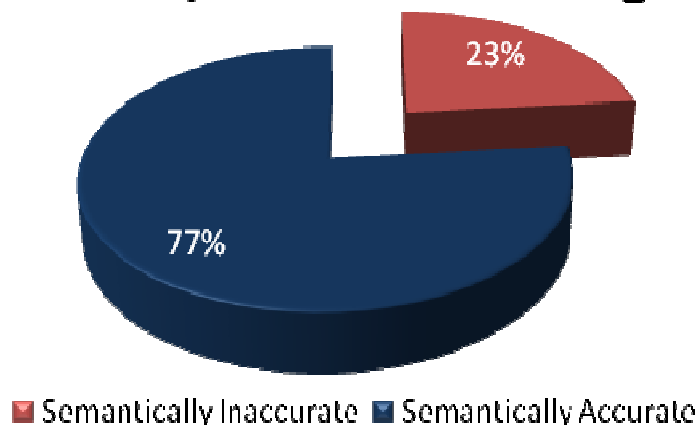
SULEC/ICLE	RAW FREQUENCY	✗	✓	% OF INACCURACY	% OF ACCURACY
Written data	2477	579	1898	23,38	76,62

**TABLE 22:** Written Language: Overall Results

If we have a look at the raw figures, the information obtained indicates that 579 of a total of around 2,500 examples analysed are semantically inaccurate, while 1,898 of the items exhibit a high degree of semantic accuracy. We still find that 23 per cent of the examples are inaccurate. The pie chart below represents these results graphically.

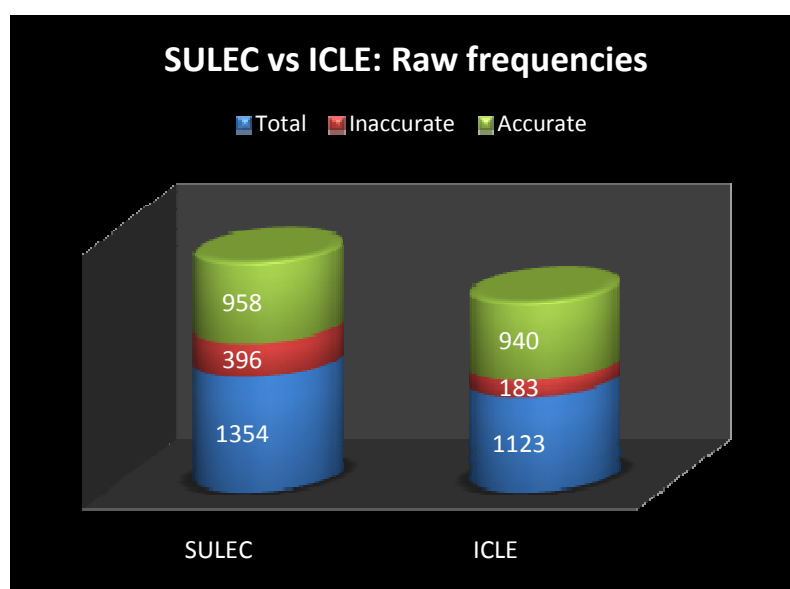
The blue area depicts the number of accurate uses and the red part gives a picture of the area covered by the semantic inaccuracy present in the false friends analysed. The red area (number of inaccurate uses) covers roughly a quarter of the total.

## SULEC /ICLE-Written Language



**FIGURE 14:** Inaccurate and Accurate Uses in Written Language: Percentages

Figure 14 gives us a general overview of the students' use of FF in their written compositions. However, it seems appropriate to break these data down into two so that it is possible to compare the results in both SULEC and ICLE. Figure 15 below shows the results of both corpora separately. An informal observation of the frequencies from both corpora shows that there are more examples of false friends in SULEC than in ICLE, 1,354 vs. 1,123 respectively.



**FIGURE 15:** False friends in SULEC and ICLE: Raw frequencies

A more reliable comparison between these two sets of data requires normalised frequencies (per 10,000 words) which take into account the number of words in each

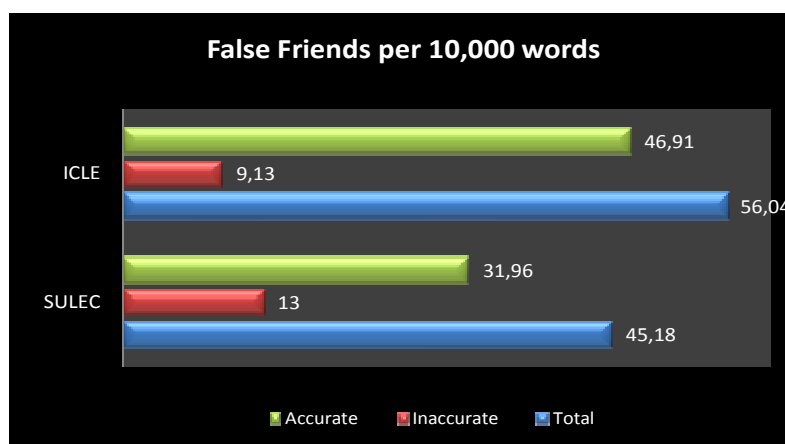
corpus (SULEC: 299, 707 words and ICLE: 200,376 words). If we take the number of words per corpus and the number of false friends per 10,000 words (Table 23), the amount of FF per 10,000 is higher in ICLE than in SULEC (56 vs. 45 per 10,000 respectively). Despite of this, the percentage of errors is higher in SULEC (29,2 per cent) than in ICLE (16,3 per cent).

SULEC (299.707 words)	RAW FREQUENCY	✗	✓	% of ✗	% of ✓	per 10.000		
						FREQUENCY	% OF INACCURACY	% OF ACCURACY
Written data	1354	396	958	29,2	70,8	45,18	13	31,96

ICLE (200.376)	RAW FREQUENCY	✗	✓	% of ✗	% of ✓	per 10.000		
						FREQUENCY	% OF INACCURACY	% OF ACCURACY
Written data	1123	183	940	16,3	83,7	56,04	9,13	46,91

**TABLE 23:** Occurrence of FF in Written Language: Raw and Normalised Frequencies

The figure below illustrates these data, the length and the different colours of the bars give us an idea of the amount of FF per 10,000 in each corpus and of the percentages of accurate and inaccurate uses per 10,000 words.

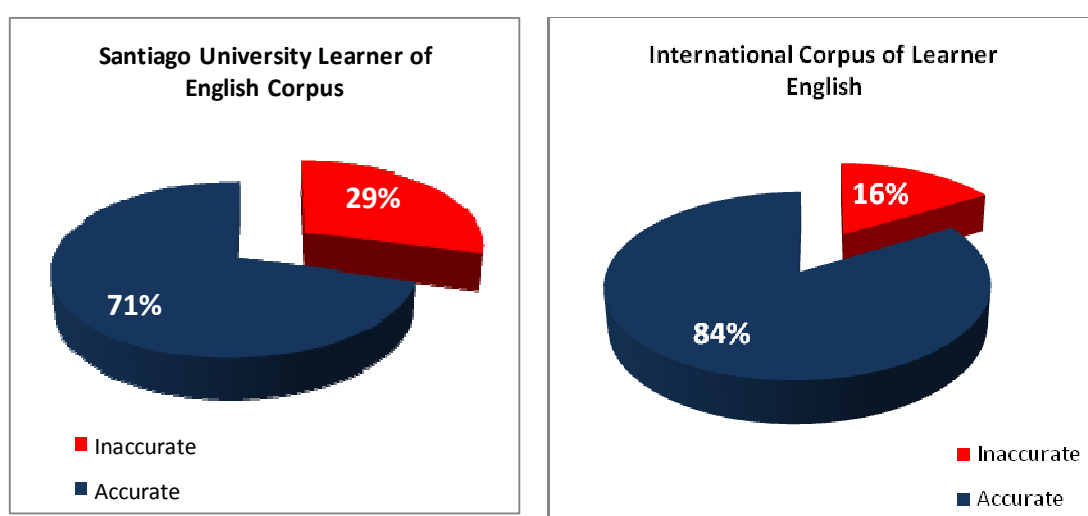


**FIGURE 16:** False friends per 10,000 words in SULEC and ICLE

As can be easily gathered from Figure 16 above, the bar representing the total number of FF is longer in ICLE than in SULEC, which indicates that there are more cases of false friends in the former than in the latter. However, the amount of inaccurate uses continues to be higher in SULEC than in ICLE. This may be justified by the fact

that SULEC contains texts written by students with an intermediate and an advanced level of English while ICLE includes texts written exclusively by students with an advanced level. It is logical to think that the mixture of proficiency levels in SULEC may have resulted in an increase of errors in this corpus.

If we have a look at the percentages concerning FF which are semantically accurate and FF which display some degree of semantic inaccuracy in SULEC and ICLE, we can conclude that there are more mistakes in the former (in SULEC) than in the latter. While inaccurate responses constitute 29 per cent of the samples found in SULEC, in ICLE, 16 per cent of the FF used are inaccurate, and 84 per cent of them being fully accurate. Figure 17 below illustrates this.



**FIGURE 17:** Percentage of In/Accuracies in SULEC and ICLE

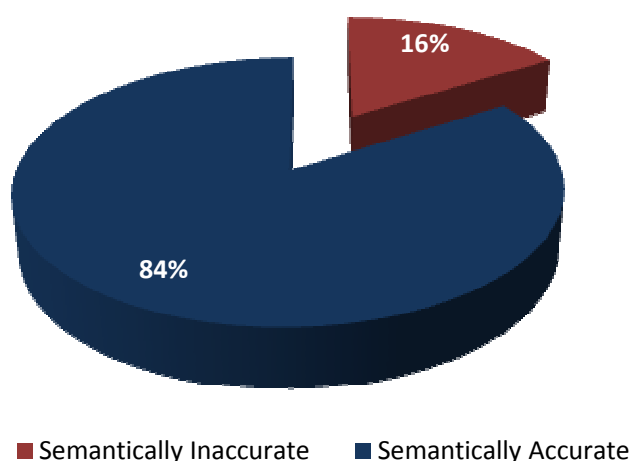
If we delve into the **spoken production** of Spanish learners of English, we observe that the figures vary with respect to the overall results for written language (Table 22, pp. 283). Thus the percentage of accurate and inaccurate uses differ from those found for written language (16 per cent against 84 per cent in spoken production vs. 23 per cent against 77 per cent in written language), and the degree of semantic accuracy goes up to 84 per cent. Table 24 shows the number of false friends in the spoken databases (oral component of SULEC and LINDSEI), the correct and incorrect samples and their corresponding percentages of inaccuracy and accuracy.

SULEC/LINDSEI	RAW FREQUENCY	✗	✓	% OF INACCURACY	% OF ACCURACY
Spoken data	548	89	459	16,24	83,76

**TABLE 24:** Spoken Language: Overall Results

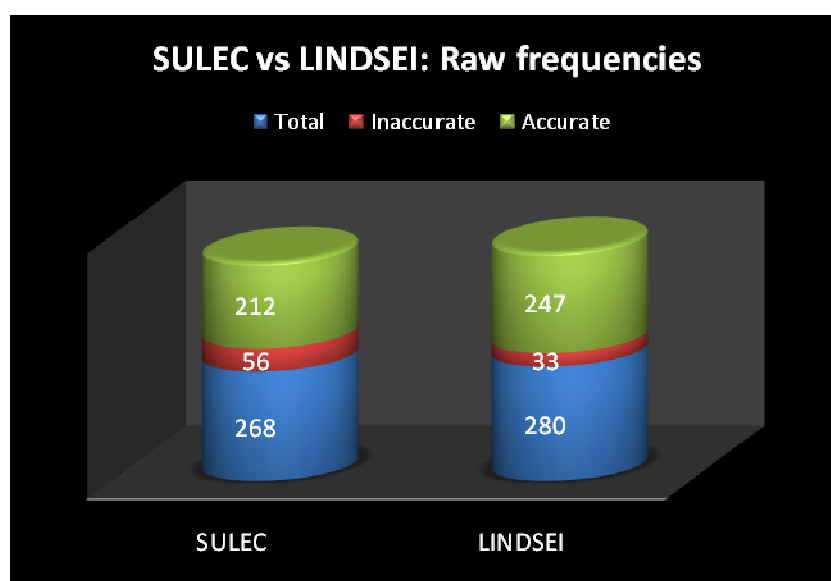
If we have a look at the raw figures in Table 24, the information obtained indicates that only 89 of a total of about 550 examples analysed are semantically inaccurate while 459 of the items exhibit a high degree of semantic accuracy. We still find that 16 per cent of the examples are inaccurate. The pie chart below represents these results graphically. The blue area depicts the number of accurate uses and the red part gives a picture of the area covered by the semantic inaccuracy present in the false friends analysed. The red area (number of inaccurate uses) constitutes 16 per cent of the total.

### SULEC/LINDSEI-Spoken Language



**FIGURE 18:** Inaccurate and Accurate Uses in Spoken Language: Percentages

The previous pie chart gives us a general overview of the students' use of FF in their spoken English. However, it is interesting to compare the results in both SULEC and LINDSEI so that we can decide if there are significant differences in the results obtained in both databases. Figure 19 and Table 25 below show the results for both corpora in a separate way. An informal observation of the raw frequencies from both corpora shows that there are some more examples of false friends in LINDSEI than in SULEC, 280 vs. 268 respectively.



**FIGURE 19:** False friends in SULEC and LINDSEI: Raw Frequencies

If we have a look at the normalised frequencies per 10,000 words, we observe that the number of FF is higher in LINDSEI than in SULEC. Despite of this, the percentages of inaccuracies are higher in SULEC (20.9 per cent) than in ICLE (11.8 per cent). The charts in Table 25 reveal this.

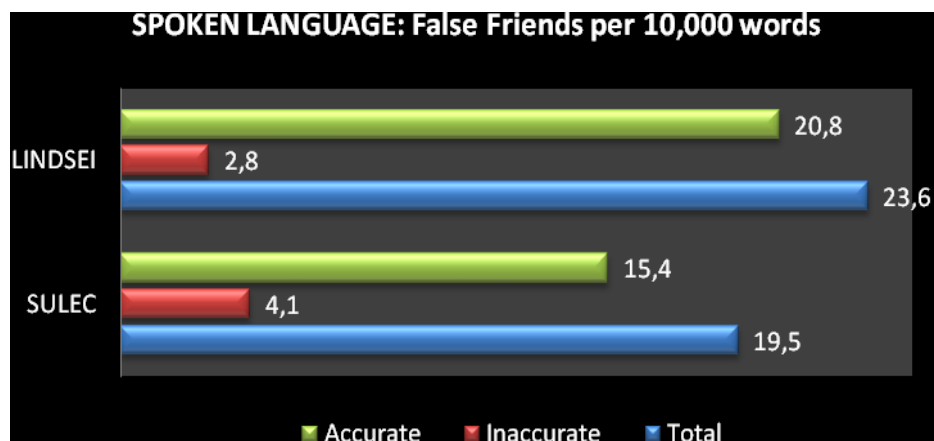
SULEC (137.660 words)	RAW FREQUENCY	✗	✓	% of ✗	% of ✓	per 10.000		
						FREQUENCY	% OF INACCURACY	% OF ACCURACY
Spoken data	268	56	212	20,9	79,1	19,5	4,1	15,4

LINDSEI (118.536 words)	RAW FREQUENCY	✗	✓	% of ✗	% of ✓	per 10.000		
						FREQUENCY	% OF INACCURACY	% OF ACCURACY
Spoken data	280	33	247	11,8	88,2	23,6	2,8	20,8

**TABLE 25:** Occurrence of FF in Spoken Language: Raw and Normalised Frequencies

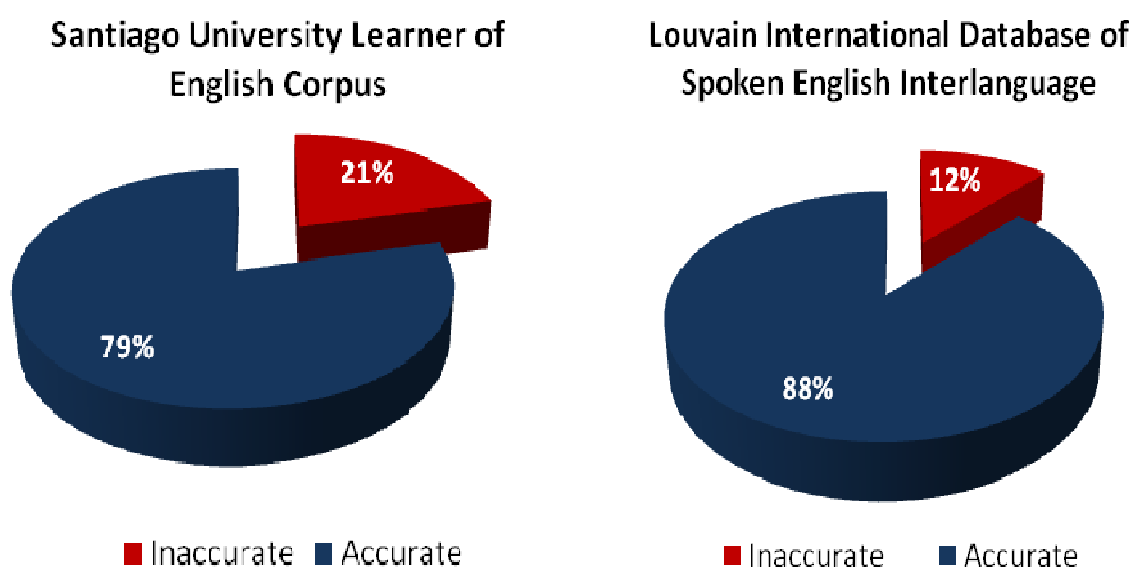
Figure 20 illustrates these data, the length and the different colours of the bars give us an idea of the amount of FF per 10,000 in each corpus and of the percentages of accurate and inaccurate uses per 10,000 words.



**FIGURE 20:** False friends in SULEC and LINDSEI: Normalised frequencies (10,000 words)

As seen in this figure, the bar representing the total number of FF is longer in LINDSEI than in SULEC, which indicates that there are more cases of false friends in the former than in the latter. However, the amount of inaccurate uses continues to be higher in SULEC (21 per cent) than in LINDSEI (12 per cent). These results somewhat suggest that learners in LINDSEI have a better command of false friends.

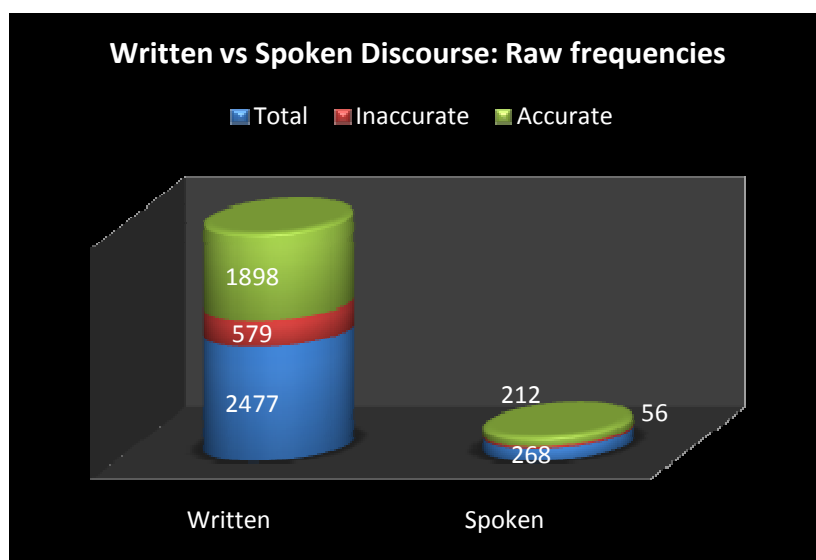
If we have a look at the percentages concerning the FF which are semantically accurate and the FF which display some degree of semantic inaccuracy in SULEC and LINDSEI (Figure 21), we can observe that there are more mistakes in SULEC than in the ICLE. While inaccurate uses of false friends constitute 21 per cent of the samples found in SULEC, in LINDSEI, this rate is reduced to only 12 per cent.



**FIGURE 21:** Percentage of In/Accuracies in SULEC and LINDSEI

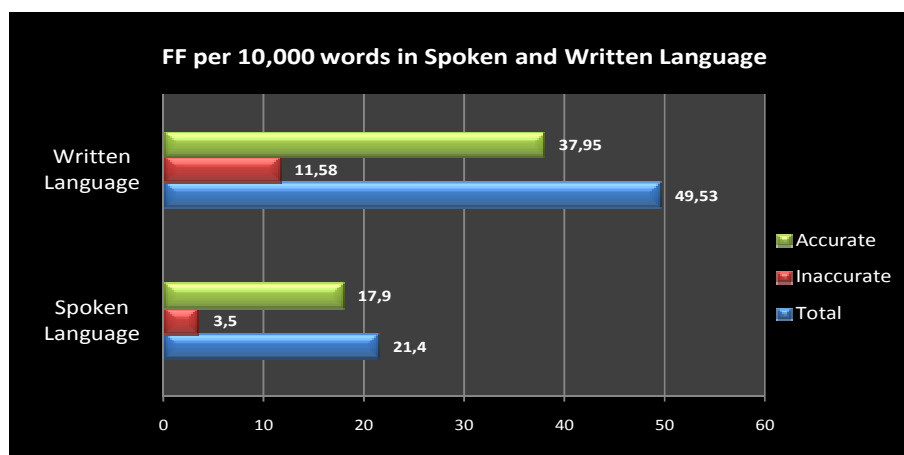


Apart from comparing results in both databases, it is interesting to compare results in both spoken and written language in order to see if the number of inaccurate uses is the same in both modes of expression or it tends to be higher either in spoken or in the written medium. To this end, I will first compare the raw frequencies in both corpora (Figure 22). As regards the raw frequencies, the amount of FF is much higher in written than in spoken language. This might be due to the fact that we have more data in written than in spoken language (written language: 500,083 words vs. 256,196 in spoken language).



**FIGURE 22:** False Friends in Written and Spoken Data: Raw Frequencies

If we have a look at the standardised figures in both modes of communication, we observe that the occurrence of FF per 10,000 is higher in written than in spoken language (Figure 23, blue line).



**FIGURE 23:** False Friends in Written and Spoken Language per 10,000 words

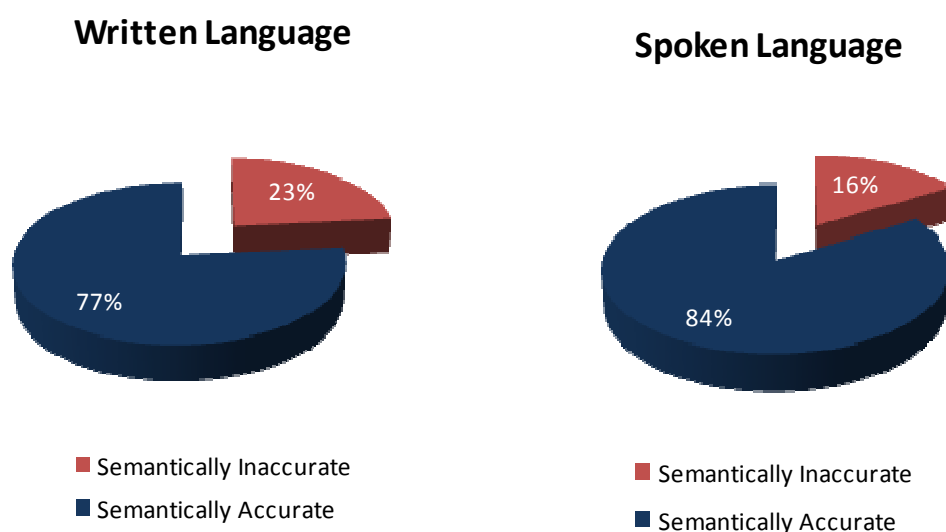
While there are around 50 FF per 10,000 words in written language, there are 21 of those in spoken language.<sup>67</sup> As regards the percentage of inaccuracies in written language and spoken language, the proportion of mistakes is higher in written than in spoken language (around 12 out of 49,5 false friends are inaccurate in learners' writings while almost 4 out of 21,4 false friends are wrong in speaking). These data could make lead us to think that the higher number of mistakes in written language is due to the fact that the number of examples is higher in writing than in speaking.

Written data	RAW FREQUENCY	✗	✓	% OF INACCURACY	% OF ACCURACY	FREQUENCY per 10.000	✗ per 10.000	✓ per 10.000
SULEC/ICLE (500,083 words)	2477	579	1898	23,38	76,62	49,53	11,58	37,95

Spoken data	RAW FREQUENCY	✗	✓	% OF INACCURACY	% OF ACCURACY	FREQUENCY per 10.000	✗ per 10.000	✓ per 10.000
SULEC/LINDSEI (256,196 words)	548	89	459	16,2	83,8	21,4	3,5	17,9

**TABLE 26:** Occurrence of FF in Speech and Writing: Raw Frequencies, Percentages and Normalised Frequencies

However, if we consider the percentages of wrong uses (Table 26, green columns), the results still show that the number of mistakes is higher in the learners' writings than in the learners' spoken production. Thus, the percentage of errors is 23 per cent in writing *versus* 16 per cent in speaking, as shown in Figure 24.



**FIGURE 24:** False Friends in Written and Spoken Data: Percentages

<sup>67</sup> This might be explained by the fact that most false friends are Romance in origin and Latin-based terms are rather formal and more typically used in written language.

At first glance, the data seem to indicate that the revision and editing actions which characterise the writing process are not effective when it comes to getting rid of these lexical flaws. However, we have seen that the results for written language include the performance of a wider learner population which also covers intermediate students (represented in the SULEC database). The errors made by lower level students appear to have affected the general results for written language by increasing the global percentage of errors in this mode of expression. In this respect, it could be hypothesised that the level or command of the language plays a more important role in the consideration of false friends than the medium of expression (speech vs. writing) variable.

### 3.7.2. *Qualitative Results*

The nouns *practice*, *topic* and *parents* are among the false friends with the highest number of occurrences (raw frequency) in learner language, followed by the verb *realise*. In spite of the fact that these lexical items are really frequent in the learners' productive use of English, these words are not accurately used in all cases. The negative influence of the learners' mother tongue is felt in the presence of some uses of the word *practice* (e.g. *to do practices*), in the inaccurate use of the noun *topic* to denote a commonplace (e.g. *slaves [...] the topic of black people with chains*) or in the occurrence of the verb *realise* in the collocation *to realise works*.

The word *parents* is the only one of the most recurrent FF which shows no problems of semantic interference. This word seems to have been fully acquired. The concreteness of this noun, together with its early introduction in English courses, could have helped learners achieve a full command of this word at this stage.

Regarding those items which are hundred per cent accurate in learner language, twenty-five out of the 100 false friends belonging to the three possible categories of false friends (i.e. total, partial and contextual) and to different parts of speech (nouns: *parents*, *carpet*, *batteries*, adjectives: *fresh*, *fine*, *sympathetic* and verbs: *record*, *urge*) are perfectly used and show no traces of the Spanish influence in their meanings. Some of these words are basic and quite general, such as *fine*, *embarrassed*, and even *fresh*; other lemmas are linked to the academic world which is certainly close to students (e.g. *office*, *library*, *college*, *stamp* or *file*). Some other words which are correctly used are restricted to more specific fields, in particular, to the world of business (e.g. *firm*,

*record, urge, succeed, luxury, confident, ultimate, batteries*) or even to a set of many different realms (e.g. the nouns *soap, carpet, camp, rope, tap* or the adjectives *sympathetic, fatal, apparent, regular, bizarre, blank*).

On the contrary, there are other words that are difficult for learners to use. A noun, such as *career*, which is also quite common in learner language, is persistently causing problems. Learners use it to mean “university course.” Students appear to be inevitably tempted to use this word in the wrong context when they are talking about their university studies. It is likely that learners’ associations between English *career* with Spanish *carrera* are so strong in their minds that it is difficult for them to get rid of the Spanish concept. In this case, teachers must explicitly mention this problem and provide learners with some clues to avoid any mistakes that could arise from the misuse of this word.

There are some other lexical items, such as the noun *locals*, the verbs *molest* and *resume* or the adjective *comprehensive* which are never used correctly by learners in any of the three corpora considered. If we examine when and where learners resort to these words, there seem to be two main reasons why learners use and misuse these words. Students seem to make use of these words as the result of either a compensation strategy (communication technique) or a cognitive process (overgeneralization).

- (1) On the one hand, words such as *molest, resume, commodity* and *fabric* (all of them misused in learners’ language) are used by learners as a kind of compensation strategy. Learners use these words in an attempt to fill in a gap of knowledge in the L2. Thus, learners transfer words from their L1 into the L2 in order to try out their effectiveness in the communication process. This is clear from the use of *molest* and *resume*. These words are not found in everyday English. It is very likely that students are experimenting with language in order to see if they are able to communicate their message. However, this strategy may have negative results whenever false friends are involved. The resulting utterances may have a radically different meaning from the intended one. As a way of illustration, we will take an example from SULEC which reads: “[...] *persons that smoke in this places*<sup>68</sup> ***molest*** to the rest of the persons (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 1149).

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<sup>68</sup> As aforementioned, examples from the corpora are not altered. If there are grammatical mistakes or lexical mistakes of any type, these are preserved.

(2) On the other hand, the use of words, such as *locals*, *plate*, *comprehensive*, *casual*, *accommodate*, and *appoint* seem to be the outcome of an overgeneralization process. Students know that there are words which are spelt in a similar way in English and Spanish and have exactly the same meanings (e.g. *actor* vs. *actor*, *hospital* and *hospital*); and they apply this same principle to the rest of words. Under this assumption, Spanish students tend to use false friends in contexts which are not appropriate for English (e.g. *Every people see it and it is not casual. It's true that television has influed in children and adults very much.* <ICLE-SP-UCM-0006.5>; *Homosexuals are even more comprehensive with their boy/girlfriends because they know better their likes.* (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 242). In fact, it is very likely that students have encountered, learned and/or even used these lexical items before (since they know how to spell them properly). However, learners' association between the L1 and L2 similar words is so strongly rooted in their brains that they are not able to single out the semantic domains of these words in each language (cognate-pairing mechanism).

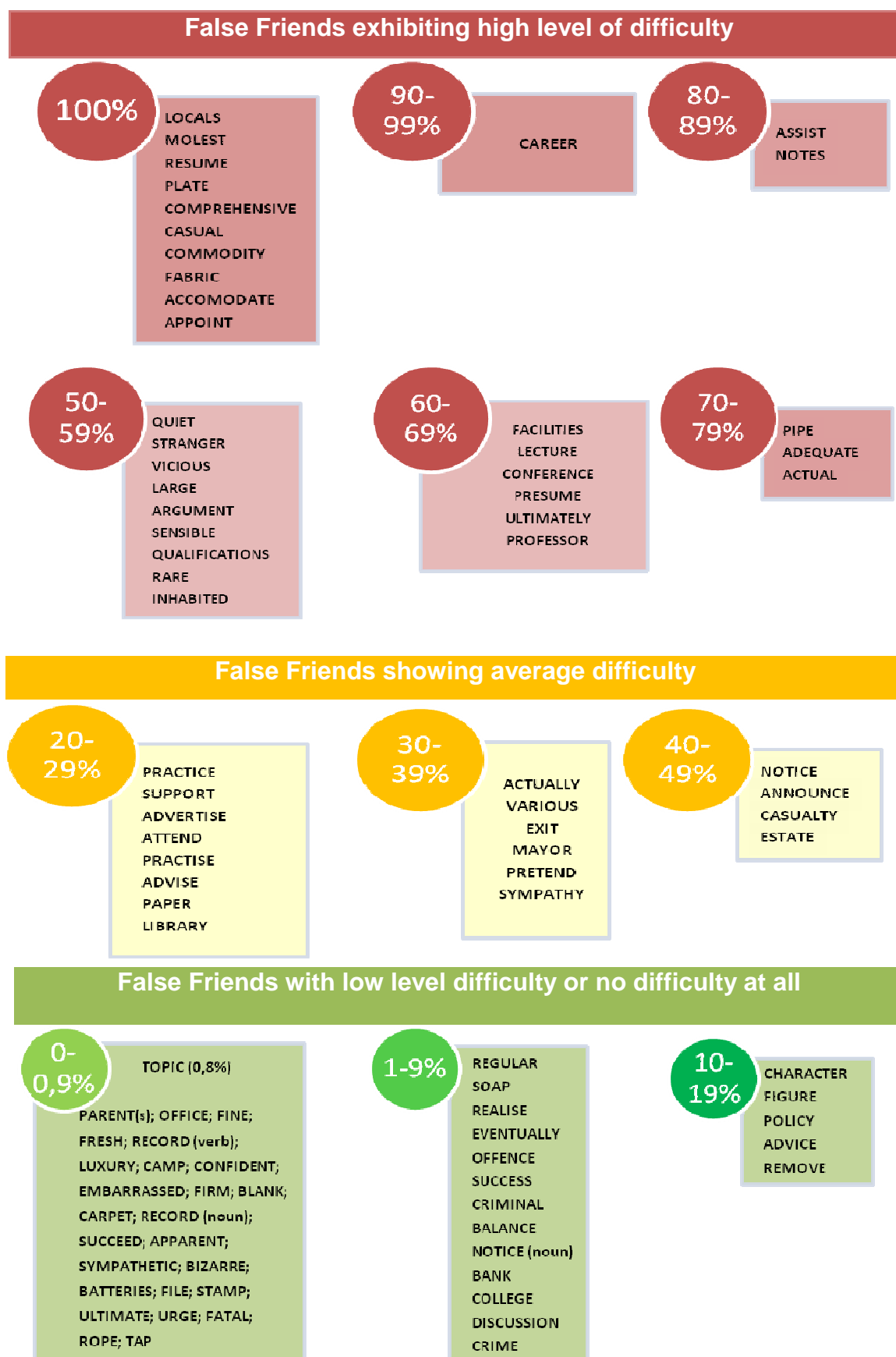
Concerning differences between spoken and written language, learners use more false friends in their written production than in their spoken production. Likewise, the number of mistakes in written language is higher than in spoken language. Nouns such as *parents*, *topic*, *career*, *paper* and the verb *realise* are frequently used by learners in both types of discourse. ***Career*** and ***paper*** are problematic in both the writing and the spoken modes.

On the one hand, the word *career* is generally used as a synonym of degree or university course, which constitutes an obvious case of crosslinguistic transfer in both speech and writing (e.g. *When you choose to study an university career, you expect you may get a job* <ICLE-SP-UCM-0030.4>; *I want to go abroad but I think I'll have to stay in Santiago because I I want to: finish my career and I have to study* (SULEC-SP-AL-DOCUMENT 596); *it's my second (eh) career [...]the first one I did from the teaching . training but infant education* </B><LINDSEI\_SP021>). Despite of the fact that this word is said to be continuously corrected by teachers in the classroom, the cognitive associations between English *career* with Spanish *carrera* appear to be so strong that it is impossible for students to keep these words independent in their mental lexicons.

On the other hand, utterances including the word *paper* illustrate morphological and semantic transfer. When students say or write “a paper” they mean a sheet of paper, as in *they give you a **paper*** (SULEC-SP-AL-DOCUMENT 536); *Perhaps the people that smoke don't respect the **papers** in the doors that say "No Smoking"* (SULEC-WL-IL-DOCUMENT 435); *Alsemero, who at this stage of the **paper** is the object of Beatrice Joana's love, wants to test whether she is virgin or not.* <ICLE-SP-ALC-0005.1>. When *paper* is countable in English, it denotes either a newspaper or a scientific document. It refers neither to a “sheet of paper” nor to a character’s role in a book or film, as SSEFL think.

Concerning the differences in the data provided by the three databases (SULEC, ICLE and LINDSEI), learners in the Louvain-based databases (ICLE and LINDSEI) are, broadly speaking, more accurate in their use of false friends than learners in the Santiago-based database (SULEC). As aforementioned, the fact that learners in the former have an advanced level of English has clearly had an impact on the results. The Louvain corpora contain the written and spoken production of upper intermediate to advanced students while there are texts in SULEC belonging to learners with an intermediate level of English. The learner’s context and opportunities for language use and practice might be also one of the reasons for the differences in the amount of errors.

Considering the overall results, the 100 false friends analysed are grouped into three different sets according to the degree of difficulty displayed in learner language (Figure 25). Thus these words have been divided into: highly problematic false friends (from 50 to 100 per cent of errors) which need to be taught, learnt and revised (in red), those words which pose some difficulties (20-50 per cent of errors) coloured in yellow and those which are somewhat easy for learners to use and which exhibit a high percentage of accuracy (0-20 per cent of errors) in green in Figure 25.



**FIGURE 25:** Arrangement of False Friends according to their Degree of Difficulty

Figure 25 (previous page) rates the level of difficulty of the 100 false friends according to the data gathered from the three learner corpora and shows the percentage of error of these words. The circles on the left specify the percentage of errors, the two extremes are represented by those with 100 per cent errors (students always misuse the false friends in this group) and those with 0 to 0,9 per cent of errors (lexical items in this group seem to be perfectly acquired) at the other end. This distribution of FF into levels of difficulty might help teachers foresee problems in the use of these words and to emphasise the most problematic false friends in language teaching. For obvious reasons, those false friends which do not occur in learner language (7 per cent) are excluded from this grouping. Nonetheless, conclusions on the learners' difficulties with words, such as *collar*, *conductor*, *diversion*, *motorist*, *occurrence*, *preservative*, and *solicitor* which do not occur in learner language will be examined in the second part of this study (see chapter 4, sections 4.6.1. and 4.6.2, pp. 343, 385).

### **3.8. General Summary and Conclusions**

#### *3.8.1. General Summary: Study I*

The first part of this dissertation was conceived to analyse the occurrence of 100 high-frequency *false friends* in the spoken and written production of Spanish learners. This study was carried out with the support of three computerised learner corpora which contain samples of written and spoken texts produced by Spanish learners of English. One of the main aims of this corpus-based study was to examine the students' use of a set of false friends with a view to determining the learners' problems with these lexical items. This study intended to identify the learners' difficulties with false friends in their written and spoken productions so as to help teachers respond and meet the learners' needs concerning this lexical area.

After reviewing the previous literature of false friends in chapters 1 and 2, the corpus-based research of this dissertation is presented in chapter 3. In this chapter, the nature of the study, its aims, the methodology used and the main findings and outcomes of the survey are presented. These outcomes are based on both a qualitative and a quantitative analysis of the use of 100 high-frequency FF by Spanish learners of English. In the following section, the general conclusions drawn from the study are presented. The ultimate goals of this last section are to reflect on the results provided by



the three learner corpora in question and to identify the students' main difficulties with these lexical items. This will possibly assist learners and language teachers equally.

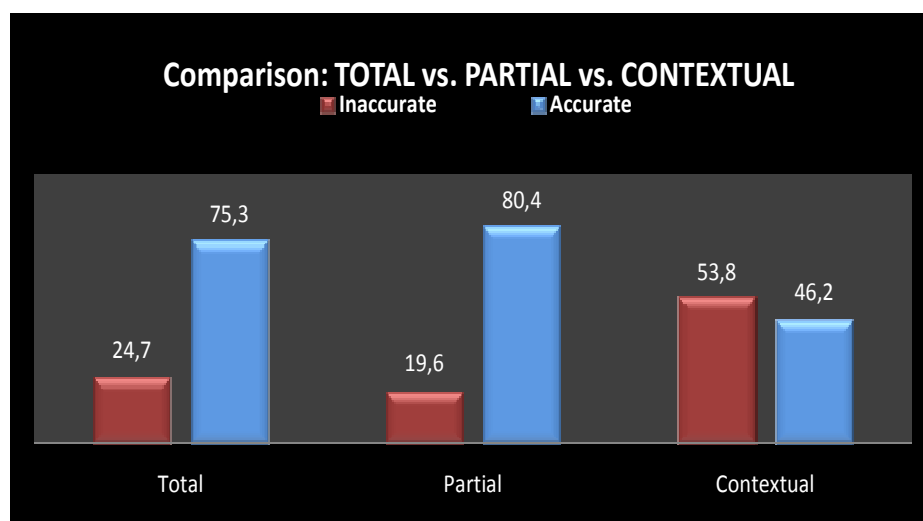
### 3.8.2. *General Conclusions: Study I*

This section tries to give an answer to the main research questions posed at the beginning of this study. The data obtained from the analysis of learner language allow us to draw some conclusions on what learners know and what learners need to know about the 100 high-frequency FF under analysis in this survey. One of the main aims of this piece of research was to find out whether false friends constitute a real problem for language learners, or if FF are just an invented myth which is not important beyond Lado's contrastive view of language teaching. I will next try to answer this and the other questions that have been posed in this study one by one.

As regards the first research question,

- Are learners using or misusing false friends in their production? In case false friends prove to be difficult for learners to use in their written and spoken performance, what type of false friends (total, partial or contextual false friends) are the hardest ones?

The data in the learner corpora analysed indicate that Spanish students have problems with some of these words. As a matter of fact, Spanish learners resort to some English false friends and use them in a different sense. However, not all of the 100 false friends under examination are equally problematic for learners in their L2 performance. Some of them are certainly more challenging than others (see Figure 25, pp. 296). Thus, according to the data obtained, there are some false friends which are frequently misused (see *comprehensive*, *locals*, *career* or *assist*), there are some other FF which are of average difficulty (see, for instance, *advise*, *support*, *pretend* or *sympathy*) and, finally, there are false friends which are acknowledged to be problematic in the literature of the topic and show no problems in the data analysed (e.g. *rope*, *blank*, *carpet* or *office*). If we look at the category to which these 100 FF belong, there is a difference in the number of mistakes found in total, partial and contextual false friends. The largest proportion of mistakes goes to contextual (53.8 per cent), followed by total (24.7 per cent) and, finally, partial (19.6 per cent) false friends.



**FIGURE 26:** Comparing Total/Partial/Contextual FF: Percentages

This diagram provides a general summary of the overall results across categories. However, it is also true that the results for certain false friends, pertaining to different categories, sometimes show minor differences in the number of misuses and right uses. Thus, *notice* (total), *various* (contextual) and *conference* (partial) show a similar proportion of semantic accurate and inaccurate uses. Still, it is important to point out that although false friends of different types (total, partial and contextual) may be equally problematic for learners in terms of use, the problems that different categories of false friends may bring about in communication are not the same. In fact, the misuse of total false friends may produce more serious mistakes than partial and/or contextual FF. While an English speaker may fail to notice an inaccurate use of a contextual FF (e.g. *There are **various** degrees of imprisonment*) and may let off inaccuracies in the use of partial FF (e.g. *If you talk in a **conference** you must talk with a formal language*), the misuse of a total false friend never goes unnoticed for a native speaker. Furthermore, it normally comes together with an effect on the hearer; total FF may cause puzzlement, surprise or annoyance (e.g. Television spread *notices* which increased the hate between the ethnic groups).

A different question is the learning difficulty of each of these types of FF. Apparently, total false friends are easier to learn than partial false friends (Hayward & Moulin, 1984: 19; Odlin, 1989: 79; Frantzen, 2008: 44). Total false friends have consistently different meanings in both languages, while partial false friends may be “true” friends in some contexts, and “false” friends in other contexts. Moreover,

difficulties with partial false friends are highly increased by the semantic density of these words. Partial false friends tend to be polysemous words in both languages while total false friends include expressions which have a more monosemic-like nature.

This hypothesis that partial false friends are more difficult to acquire than total false friends has not been confirmed in this survey. This study shows that total false friends are more problematic for learners in the productive use of English than partial false friends. This might be due to the fact that the chances of using partial FF right are greater; partial false friends have identical uses (e.g. English *argument* and Spanish *argumento*) on some occasions, while total false friends always have totally different meanings in both languages (e.g. English *carpet* and Spanish *carpeta*). In any case, this does not mean that the intrinsic nature of partial false friends (polysemous words) makes the students' conscious learning of these words harder; however, this is not reflected in the learners' production.

As regards the second research question posed in this survey,

- How often do students resort to these words? what is the proportion of accurate and inaccurate uses of these lexical items? and are there any problems in the linguistic contexts surrounding FF?

According to the analysis of the 756,279 words of the three learner corpora, it is possible to say that the proportion of false friends is at least of 40 items every 10,000 words (Table 21). This does not mean that there are only 40 false friends in 10,000. This estimate is exclusively based on the occurrence of 100 words examined, that is, it takes into account a small number of the entire set of FF. Nonetheless, it is a fairly good amount of FF, and this is even more relevant if we take into account that 22 per cent of those are incorrectly used by learners. These misused false friends can bring about important misunderstandings and communication problems between learners and native speakers of English (as shown in example (359) *"[the] homosexual persons are vicious!!"* (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 1002)). Therefore, the misuse of these words could hinder learners' communication with other speakers who do not share the same linguistic background. That is why false friends should be taught in an EFL context, we could thus reduce the possibilities of communication failure to the minimum.

On the whole, if we focus on the analysis of learner language, spelling likeness or formal similarities between both languages often lead learners to the misuse of these misleading words. Learners tend to compare both languages and think that similar words may have exactly the same senses and uses. In effect, if we pay attention to the

detailed analysis of the meanings attached to the 100 FF under investigation, we see that, most of the times, learners are not acquainted with the semantic divergence existing between certain English words and their mother tongue look-alikes. Accordingly, Spanish students use some English terms such as, for instance, **actual**, **professor** or **appoint** in the Spanish way instead of in the English way. It seems that learners draw automatic associations between L2 items and L1 similar words. These associations prevent learners from reaching a flawless performance in the L2. In this respect, it is important for teachers to pinpoint that even two similar words in the L1 and in the L2 which overlap in meaning may differ pragmatically speaking.

Students sometimes show evident signs of knowing the meaning of a given FF; however, they do not seem to be familiar with its specific collocations or particular contexts of use (e.g. **assist**). Although these errors were not registered in the final results of the study (remember that for the purposes of this research, semantic transfer leading to the communication of a different meaning is more important than grammatical mistakes), I will refer here to some violations of the grammatical properties of these words. The grammatical features of these English words seem to be influenced by the L1 as well. Thus, the English and the Spanish idiosyncratic properties of **attend** and *atender* get mixed up on some occasions, as shown in the use of the verb phrase **attend to classes “regularly”** (example 43: page 119). Spanish learners show that they know the meaning of the English verb, but still, its use shows residues of transfer. The use of *attend* followed by the preposition *to* is a clear remnant of the L1 influence on the L2 use. The grammatical properties of the Spanish verb (verb + preposition: *asistir a*) are automatically transferred to the English word. This may possibly indicate that although students know the meaning of the English verb (and, consequently, the main semantic differences with the Spanish similar lexical item), the students’ tendency to connect the foreign language with their mother tongue is so deeply rooted in the students’ minds that they apply to English the syntactic patterns and idiosyncratic uses typical of the L1. Spanish students even transfer whole phrases from Spanish into English as in example 184, where the verb **anuncied** (misspelt for **announced**) co-occurs with **notice**, which constitutes a clear case of interference of the Spanish collocation *anunciar una noticia*. This provides us with clear evidence of the extent to which the L1 can have a powerful effect on foreign language performance. Therefore, language interference does not affect individual words but also lexical chunks and expressions.

When analysing certain false friends, I also found the effects of intralinguistic confusions in words like *lecture*, *quiet*, *estate* or *policy* above all. Sometimes students mistakenly use *lectures* for *lecturers*, *quiet* for *quite*, *estate* for *state*, or *policy* for *politics*. These other confusions are important to bear in mind but they have not being recorded in the table of quantitative results since these errors have their origin in an intrinsic difficulty of the English language (Laufer's concept of synformy), and not in the interlinguistic phenomenon of false friends.

Concerning the third question:

- What are the reasons for the misuse of these lexical items? How could we avoid problems with FF?

When trying to account for the reasons why learners use false friends inappropriately, everything indicates that the origin of most problems is in the effect of crosslinguistic influence. Spanish learners rely on their first language as the basis for their use of the L2. In fact, it has been shown that the learners' performance and their use of the L2 vocabulary are greatly influenced by their L1. At first glance, the influence of the mother tongue is clearly perceived in learner language and the effect of crosslinguistic transfer affects the semantic and the pragmatic side of false friends (e.g. *take a lecture*; *advice us of smoking dangers*). We observe that Spanish learners of English resort to some English FF and use them as if they were "true cognates" or translation equivalents for their Spanish quasi-homograph counterparts. Thus, English words such as, *actual*, *notice* or *pretend* are used as English synonyms of Spanish *actual*, *noticia* and *pretender*. The learners' reliance on exact equivalence between their mother tongue and the target language is shown even in cases where this equivalence hypothesis does not work. According to the data gathered from the corpora, this excessive reliance on their mother tongue may be due to either the students' inadequate level of English, due to the bad quality of the input they receive or due to the strategies they use to communicate in the L2. It is also likely that the learners' exposure to the foreign language has not been enough or has been deficient to produce flawless spoken and written productions.

Although the phenomenon of linguistic interference can be perceived in the use of several false friends in learner language, the influence of the mother tongue is not the only factor involved in this vocabulary problem. As a matter of fact, the corpus data and the use of certain false friends (e.g. *resume*, *comprehensive* or *casual*) reveal that learners are resorting to a number of communication strategies in an attempt to solve some lacks in their L2 vocabulary which are not always successful. Some texts in both

corpora indicate that whenever learners do not know a word in English, they put a series of strategies into operation; paraphrases, conscious transfer, language shifts or word coinage are some of them. Spanish students opt for code switching, word coinage and appeal for assistance (to a lesser extent) whenever they experience some difficulties or they lack the necessary vocabulary to express their ideas and thoughts. Strategic literal translation (also called *borrowing*) and foreignisation of L1 terms are dangerous and may bring about nonsensical utterances and the communication of unintended meanings. The use of words like *exit* or *molest* in documents 117 and 913 from SULEC clearly illustrate the learners' attempt to solve a linguistic problem unsuccessfully. On the one hand, the utterance in document 117 which says [...] *the contestants of "Fame Academy" have more exit than they.* (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 177) does not make any sense to a native speaker of English. On the other hand, the use of *molest* in a sentence such as [...] *they don't molest persons who don't like smoke.* (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 913) might bring about serious misunderstandings and communication failure. In order to avoid this type of problems, learners should be able to control their first impulse to give in to the temptations of processing the L2 through their L1. This might be achieved through communicative practice. Practice would lead to faster and more stable and successful performance.

The learners' strategic control over L2 performance involves a huge cognitive effort and a process of decision-making which is susceptible to interference (Segalowitz, 1993: 370); this is precisely what happens with the problem of false friends. Learners' speech and writings are full of FF because their control over these lexical items is not complete and their communication strategies fail to succeed. These misleading words get in the way and serious errors may occur. Students should therefore be acquainted with false friends in order to a) be accurate in English and b) to stop the influence of their mother tongue in their use of vocabulary.

Practice should help them automatise and fully interiorise these misleading lexical items, their meanings and uses. As previously suggested in the qualitative analysis, an early introduction of these words appears to be effective. This is confirmed by the fact that some of the most basic and frequently-used FF pose no or very few problems (e.g. *parents* and *topic*) in learner language.

In sum, an increasing exposure of the learners to the English language, an early incorporation of these lexical items in language learning, the use of suitable techniques for the teaching and recycling of these peculiar words (e.g. meaningful examples, clear

contexts of use) and the learners' effort to learn these words and to be accurate in their use of English vocabulary are needed for the correct acquisition and use of these lexical items.

As for the fourth question,

- Are false friends affecting accuracy or other than that? Are there false friends which affect communication more negatively than others? Could false friends bring about real misunderstandings or communication breakdowns?

All types of false friends result in cases of linguistic inaccuracy when misused. However, there are categories of FF that are communicatively speaking, more negative than others. This will largely depend on the semantic notion of the word in both languages and on the type of false friends we are talking about. Thus, total false friends are far more problematic in terms of communication than contextual false friends and words which carry emotional or negative overtones, like *molest* or *vicious*, would be communicatively problematic due to their semantic content. In general, the fact that false friends may produce misunderstandings in real communication events has been reassured or bolstered up by researchers such as Hill (1982), Swan (1997) or Chamizo Domínguez (1999). Swan (1997: 170) admits the importance of knowing false friends when claiming "I once seriously upset a French student by telling him that he made dramatic progress (French *dramatique* = disastrous)," a similar example is mentioned by Chamizo Domínguez (1999:115), who talks about how the phrase "fastidious speech" caused a diplomatic incident in an American summit. Presumably, this phrase was misinterpreted by a Romance language speaker who took the word *fastidious* as an insult (this adjective means "boring" in Romance languages, such as French, Italian or Spanish, not "comprehensive/exhaustive" as in English). In the same vein, Hill (1982: i) acknowledges to be ashamed about using *fastidious* as a synonym for *fussy* before knowing that it means *irritating*, *troublesome*, or *annoying* in Latin languages. However, broadly speaking, linguistic factors such as the semantic content of false friends, the linguistic co-text and context which surround these words and extralinguistic factors such as the participants in the communication (e.g. friends, strangers, distant relatives, etc.), the setting or the context of occurrence (e.g. formal vs. informal) and the communicative function of the message will determine whether the misuse of false friends produces communicative breakdowns and misunderstandings or not. Thus a sentence such as e.g. *The deceased was a gallant and bizarre soldier* by an educated person might be misunderstood and cause puzzlement to a native English

speaker. The context of the situation (talking about a dead soldier) and the negative semantic content of the English word *bizarre* (“strange”) might make this word to be interpreted in a negative way even when the intention of the educated person was far from that. The same happens with words such as *adequate*, *casualty* or *facilities* as shown in data from the corpora. Utterances such as *the father who finds an adequate husband for her daughter* <ICLE-SP-UCM-0012.6>; *miracles will be only a series of casualties* <ICLE-SP-UCM-0007.6>; or *if they change their body they could marr[y] with more facilities* (SULEC-WP-IL-DOCUMENT 1211) might bring about communication problems due to the sense of these English words, to the contexts where these words are used and to the topics they are associated with (e.g. *homosexuality*, *marriage*, *miracles*, etc). A word such as *collar*, which would be neutral at first sight, could result either in an insult or in a funny situation when used by a non-native speaker of English in a sentence like *I will buy a collar for my wife*. Thus it may be regarded as funny if the receiver knows the real intention of the speaker (the speaker means a necklace) but it could be offensive if the addressee does not know that the real intention of the speaker is not to buy a dog collar, but a necklace. Likewise, the utterance *I’m sorry, I’m late because I’m constipated* does not sound as a natural and normal apology in English; however, a student is said to have pronounced this sentence in order to say sorry to his teacher for arriving late. In this case, the semantic load of English *constipated*, together with the context in which it occurs (formal situation, teacher-student encounter), results in an embarrassing situation.

In conclusion, the misuse of false friends whether they are total, partial or contextual always results in linguistic inaccuracy, but the nature of the word itself (its semantic properties, connotations, etc) and the context in which it occurs (components of the speech act) will determine if the misuse of false friends also affects communication in a negative way and if false friends bring about communication breakdowns.

- Are there any implications for language teaching?

Difficulties with false friends might derive from the lack of an accurate input or from the learners’ tendency to think in the L1 when they speak or write in the L2. The fact that L1 and L2 similar words are cognitively linked in the students’ brains might have a bearing on these constant confusions. It is very likely that students are not aware of the fact that these English words do not share the same semantic space as their Spanish counterparts. That is one of the reasons why teachers should provide students with



enough input on the semantic and pragmatic differences between L1 and L2 similar words. Teachers should not overlook this type of mistakes; the misuse of FF might distort the message of the speaker, as is the case of the following utterance: ***“The restaurants and cafés had to be redistributed. The space of the locals had to be separated in two areas.”*** Interruptions and corrections are needed in this case, as well as in many other cases which could obstruct effective communication. From this it follows that more attention should be paid to total false friends which normally lead to the communication of a very different meaning in the L2. In this respect, total false friends may produce more problems than partial false friends, and partial false friends are more problematic than contextual false friends. Therefore, words such as *comprehensive* or *molest* should be corrected and more vigorously emphasised than words which do not pose serious problems such as *various*. The outcomes presented in this survey could possibly help language teachers prevent those major communicative problems derived from the misuse of FF.

The results in this study suggest the importance of incorporating false friends in the English class. The teachers’ output and an early introduction to meaning differences between L1 and L2 appear to be effective. This is confirmed by the fact that some of the most frequently-used false friends in the corpora, for example, the words *parents* and *topic*, do not pose great problems. The early introduction of these words could have a bearing on the absence of mistakes in the use of these two words.

The students’ problems in FF use may well reveal some flaws in language teaching. It could be the case that teachers do not pay sufficient attention to peculiarities of word usage, such as register, typical collocations and grammatical properties (scarcity of sections on false friends in textbooks). This would have important implications for the teaching of English and, more particularly, for the teaching of vocabulary. Language teachers should approach lexis not as a compilation of single words with fixed meanings, but as with meaningful examples within particular contexts. In this way, difficulties concerning word usage could be greatly reduced. Apart from this, evidence from the three corpora suggests that students with an advanced level of the language are also influenced by their mother tongue and have difficulties with false friends (see, for instance, the analysis of the word *qualifications*). That means that the teaching of FF should be also present at advanced stages of L2 learning. Thus, teachers should not take for granted that basic false friends, which could have been already studied in previous courses, do not deserve attention. It may be the case that advanced

students do not remember these basic items and problems arise. This definitely shows the importance of revision and recycling in the English class. As regards the way teachers might deal with these lexical items; teachers should minimise the presence of the L1 in the classroom and try to avoid the “grammar-translation” method for the explanation of these lexical items. A good way to do so is by giving students some background knowledge on the pronunciation of these lexical items, their meaning, collocations and usage by means of illustrative examples which gives students a clear idea of the meaning and use of these items in English (see some suggested techniques for the presentation of false friends in Appendix 2, pp. 463). This diminishes the probability of establishing incorrect links between this word and the similar lexical item in Spanish, favouring the students’ meaningful learning of these words.



## CHAPTER 4.

### ON THE KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF FALSE FRIENDS BY SPANISH LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

#### 4.1. Justification

The previous chapter of this dissertation was concerned with the analysis of false friends in the spoken and written production of Spanish learners. The information obtained from three learner corpora (ICLE, LINDSEI and SULEC) was of great value in order to determine the *frequency* of use of 100 high-frequency English words with a wide coverage (Laufer, 1989; Hu and Nation, 2000) in learner language. In addition to this, it was possible to reach a number of conclusions about *how* and *when* Spanish students have recourse to false friends in both speech and writing. Among other things, we found out that Spanish Students of English as a Foreign Language (SSEFL) do not have a comprehensive knowledge of false friends and that the learners' misuse of these words might lead to misunderstandings between native speakers and learners of English. In spite of the fact that Study I gives ample evidence of the learners' productive use of these lexical items, the corpus survey carried out so far does not provide us with any information about how learners actually interpret, and understand English false friends. However, the learners' perception and understanding of these words are of paramount importance since the way learners interpret these words may affect the learners' production and their active use of English (Melka, 1997; Nation, 2001; Webb, 2005). Thus, this second study intends to keep a balance and complement the first part of this dissertation by looking into the learners' interpretation of some of the 100 high-frequency FF considered in chapter 3. The learners' concepts, associations and interpretation of these lemmas are explored by means of a different research instrument: a questionnaire specially designed for this purpose. This research instrument pits Spanish learners against some English false friends in different contexts. The participants' answers to the questionnaire will help us identify the difficulties that Spanish learners experience in the interpretation of English false friends. The results in this second study will definitely shed some light on what English false friends are the most difficult for Spanish students to process, interpret and understand in different

receptive tasks. Special attention will be paid to the misunderstandings which may arise from the presence of these English words in some naturally occurring contexts, such as street signs or food packages (see Appendix 1, Task 5, pp.459 of the questionnaire). Before starting with the description of the study and the results drawn from it, it seems useful to refer to the parts of this survey (referred to as Study II from now onwards). Broadly speaking, the details of this survey are explained in 8 different sections: Section 1 (the present section) provides a brief justification for the need of Study II and discusses the general structure of the study; section 2 displays the main research aims guiding this survey; sections 3, 4 and 5 describe the participants, the research instrument used and the procedure followed; section 6 outlines the data analysis and shows the main results as well as the quantitative and qualitative data which are discussed in section 7. Finally, section 8 summarises the main issues and gathers the main conclusions obtained from Study II.

#### **4.2. Research Questions: Study II**

This second study is based on the assumption that false friends might mislead Spanish students in their interpretation of English. Thus, in the same way as the learners' misuse of a false friend might bring about communication problems with native speakers of English (e.g. *Sorry! I did not want to molest you*), the use of English false friends in native contexts might evoke a different meaning in the learners' minds. The similarity of some English lexemes with words in the L1 (e.g. *Follow diversion. Diversion* may be associated with Spanish *diversión*, meaning "fun") may confuse learners and lead them to believe that these words have the same meaning in both languages. Therefore, the presence of false friends in English and an inaccurate reading of these words might hinder message comprehension and lead students to misinterpret a particular English message. In order to verify or disprove this assumption, the present study attempts to look into the learners' mental concepts and their understanding of high-frequency false friends. Different visual and verbal activities containing English false friends have been used in a questionnaire in order to determine the learners' receptive knowledge of false friends and the problems derived from the misreading of these vocabulary items. Thus the activities proposed in the questionnaire aim at giving an answer to the following queries:

- Do students recognise English false friends when they come across them in reception? How well do Spanish students know and interpret these English words? Are false friends processed through L1 similar words? Does the L1 have an impact on the interpretation of these English words? What type of false friends are the most problematic ones in terms of interpretation?
- Do EFL learners identify false friends when they find them in isolation as individual words (*collar*, *lecture*, etc) in a decontextualised setting or, do false friends pass unnoticed for students?
- How well are students acquainted with the semantic properties (meanings), paradigmatic and syntagmatic features (collocations) of certain false friends? Do they know particular word combinations and collocations of these English words?
- Do students choose the right word in a clear linguistic co-text and context when they are confronted with a pair of false friends (e.g. *Her last book was a big... success/exit*)?
- Does a situational context (e.g. road signs, product labels, advertisements) help students guess and comprehend the sense of certain false friends in particular situations (e.g. *diversion*, *preservatives*, *motorist*)?
- Are false friends easier to interpret when they are embedded in the context of a text? Do texts lead to a better understanding of English false friends? Might the presence of several false friends hinder the interpretation of a whole text?

Apart from considering these research questions, the questionnaire form contains a second part which looks at false friends from a different perspective. In particular, it sets out to provide information about the learners' conscious view of the importance of false friends in language teaching; it intends to answer these specific research questions:

- Are learners acquainted with the term “false friends”?
- Are learners concerned about these lexical items? Are they really motivated to learn these English words?
- What are the students' thoughts on the importance of false friends?
- What are the techniques both English teachers and learners use to study false friends in an EFL context?
- What problems do students acknowledge having with these lexical items?

Broadly speaking, this study examines the difficulties in the interpretation and understanding of English attributable to the presence of false friends, it also explores the

learners' awareness of the phenomenon and the significance of these words in language learning. After stating the research purpose of Study II, it seems mandatory to refer to the development of this survey, the recruitment of participants, the questionnaire administration and the data analysis.

### 4.3. Subjects/Participants

As stated at the beginning of this dissertation, the focus of this research is on Spanish learners studying English in a formal academic context. This means that the participants in this research study should fall into the category of Spanish students of English as a Foreign Language (SSEFL). Thus, the *sample* group in this survey has to be representative of this *target* population. A good way of involving English learners who receive formal schooling in English was to recruit subjects in different educational institutions, such as highschools, schools of languages/language centres and universities. In fact, in order to take part in this survey, participants are required to be studying English at Baccalaureate level (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year baccalaureate students), to be registered in intermediate to advanced English courses in more “independent institutions” (which implies being from year 3 onwards in the School of Languages<sup>69</sup> or from year 4 onwards in the Centre for Modern Languages<sup>70</sup>), or to be studying English at university (from 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> year in English Studies and Chemical Engineering). Following the same principles of the first study, the target respondents are expected to have an intermediate-to-advanced level of English.

After contacting several teachers from the aforesaid different institutions, I asked them for permission to go and distribute the questionnaire among their students. The

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<sup>69</sup> In Spain, there are the so-called School of Languages, official language schools of non-university level which offer language courses for many different modern languages. These language centres depend on the Department of Education of the corresponding autonomous community and are regulated in the current Spanish education system (*Ley Orgánica de Educación*, abbreviated as LOE). Students must attend classes in these schools for 5 or 6 years depending on the community (in Galicia, students must study 6 years) in order to reach an advanced level or B2 in the *Common European Framework of Reference* (CEFR). In two years, students are awarded A2 level certificates; if they study two more years, they obtain the B1 level and when they complete two more additional years, they are awarded the B2 certificate.

<sup>70</sup> The Centre for Modern Languages is a university service whose main objective is to promote language learning across university students and beyond. Any person over 16 can enrol and attend language courses by paying a small amount of money per academic year. There are nine different levels. In the case of English, after three courses you obtain an A2 level, 2 more courses for B1, and 2 more for B2. People attain a C1 level (in the CEFR) when they reach level 8 (C1.1) and level 9 (C1.2).

general characteristics of the respondents are specified at the seven different bullet points below:

- (1) All participants in this study are learning English in different academic settings: highschool, university or other highly-reputed institutions for the study of languages.
- (2) Most respondents (89.5 per cent) were born in Galicia, although there are also subjects from other parts of Spain.
- (3) All students are aged 16 or over.
- (4) Over half the participants (59.3 per cent) admit having knowledge of French or German.
- (5) Most students (90 per cent) have a B1 or a B2 level of English according to an external criterion (taking into account the course they are enrolled in at the moment of the survey) and around half of them have once been in an English-speaking country.
- (6) An overriding majority of the learners who have filled in the questionnaire maintain that they like English, acknowledge the role of vocabulary in language learning and ensure that they listen to and read texts in English whenever it is possible for them to do so.
- (7) There are more women participants than men.

In any case, the main characteristics of the sample population in this study are clearly summarised in Table 27 below.

Language Background	N. of Participants	Gender	Age	Proficiency	Motivation
Spanish	1027	688F 327M 12 (not specified)	16 years old and over	B1 & B2= 90% C1 & C2=10%	Quite high in general

**TABLE 27: Characteristics of the Sample Population**

A more detailed description of the participants and their characteristics are presented in the following pages. PASW Statistics 18, formerly SPSS or Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, provided me with the basic descriptive statistics shown in this study. The tables, the exact frequencies and percentages contained in Study II have been extracted from the output data offered by this software.



As regards the origin of the subjects, most of them were born in Galicia<sup>71</sup> (89.5 per cent), 7 per cent of the respondents (=72 people) have their origins in other communities of Spain and 3.5 per cent were born in Latin America; all of them have Spanish or Spanish-Galician as their first language.

ORIGIN					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Galicia	919	89,5	89,5	89,5
	Rest of Spain	72	7,0	7,0	96,5
	Latin America	36	3,5	3,5	100,0
	Total	1027	100,0	100,0	

**TABLE 28:** Place of Birth of the Subjects

Concerning gender, there are more women than men in the sample population of this study. Sixty-seven per cent of them are women and thirty-two per cent are men. There are twelve participants out of the 1,027 who do not specify their gender. These data are a good reflection of the situation of schools and universities in Spain where there are more women studying than men (del Río and Alonso-Villar, 2007). The relevant figures are shown in the chart below:

FEMALE/MALE					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	688	67,0	67,8	67,8
	Male	327	31,8	32,2	100,0
	Total	1015	98,8	100,0	
Missing		12	1,2		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 29:** Distribution of the Participants by Gender

Participants have been classified into 5 different groups: up to 16 years old, from 17 to 18, from 19 to 21, from 22 to 23 and from 24 onwards. This division was made taken into account the distribution in courses of the Spanish education system at the time: compulsory secondary education (up to 16), Baccalaureate (up to 18), a three-year

<sup>71</sup>Galicia is the northwestern-most of Spain's autonomous community with two official languages: Galician and Spanish. Over 18 percent of the participants in this survey consider themselves to be bilingual in both Spanish and Galician. However, Galician and Spanish keep almost the same relationship with English in terms of false friendship (Álvarez-Lugrís, 1997). Most of the 100 high-frequency FF that have been included in this dissertation are false friends between English and Spanish and they are also false friends between English and Galician with the exception of the word *large*. The Galician word *largo* means "wide;" therefore, this adjective in Galician is not a false friend with English, but it is with Spanish. However, the actual role played by Galician in the learning of English false friends would deserve an independent study which falls out of the scope of the current research.

university course (up to 21), five-year-university degree (up to 23) and beyond university studies (24 or older).

AGE GROUPS: 12-16, 17-18, 19-21, 22-23, 24 and older					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	from 12 to 16	63	6,1	6,2	6,2
	from 17 to 18	396	38,6	38,9	45,1
	from 19 to 21	277	27,0	27,2	72,4
	from 22 to 23	101	9,8	9,9	82,3
	24 and older	180	17,5	17,7	100,0
	Total	1017	99,0	100,0	
Missing		10	1,0		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 30:** Distribution of the Participants by Age

Learners who are at the age group which goes from 17 to 18 years old are the most numerous (almost 400 participants, that is, 38.6 per cent of the total); nevertheless, there is a good combination of subjects belonging to various age groups, going from 16 years old to adults being at or over the age of 24 (17.5 per cent). This last group of students (24 or older) consists of motivated participants who are studying English at different language centres.

Information about the age of the participants is interesting to describe the sample population and it also allows us to measure the effect and relevance of age on the understanding of false friends in case I wish to control this variable.

In addition to this, the participants' knowledge of other languages is also taken into account. The fact that some respondents have a good command of other Romance languages, such as French, or other Germanic languages (such as German) could have an impact on the results. French and German have some cognate words with English; therefore, students who know German or French could have an advantage over the others and could have better results in the activities of the questionnaire. We can consider the words *bizarre* and *firm*, for example. The word *bizarre* exists in both French and English and they share the same meaning. The fact that students infer the meaning of this word by comparison with French could have helped them perform better in comprehension task 6. Likewise, those participants who know German could have resorted to German in particular cases so as to make decisions about what was wrong or right. For example, if they compare the English word *firm* with the German noun *die Firma*, students would definitely say that the definition of *firm* proposed in task 2 of the questionnaire is not correct. In all these cases, learners could have ticked the correct option by making associations between some words of these languages; this

might be a variable which influences the learners' interpretation of English false friends. As a consequence, this variable is included just in case it seems necessary to control it at some point. More than half of the participants (52.2 per cent) admit having a basic knowledge of French and about 5 per cent of the respondents know German. Most of the participants who know French have learnt it at school; furthermore, most "German-knowers" are Galician emigrants, that is, children who were born or went to live in Switzerland; nonetheless, in all cases, their mother tongue is Spanish or they are Spanish/Galician bilinguals.

**OTHER LANGUAGES**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Galician/Spanish/English	397	38,7	40,1	40,1
	Romance languages (Italian, French)	536	52,2	54,2	94,3
	Germanic languages: German	50	4,9	5,1	99,4
	Said "no" to other languages	6	,6	,6	100,0
	Total	989	96,3	100,0	
Missing		38	3,7		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 31: Participants' Knowledge of Other Languages**

As abovementioned, participants are studying English in different academic settings. Students at highschools, language centres and universities take part in this survey. This sample group constitutes then a fairly good representation of all types of students of English in Spain. The percentage of respondents per institution is well-balanced in the set of questionnaires collected. As gathered from the chart below (Table 32), 31.2 per cent of the participants are studying at high schools (Baccalaureate); 33.3 per cent are learning English in other institutions, such as language centres (School of Languages and Centre for Modern Languages), and 35.5 per cent are doing English at university level at the moment of the survey.

**COURSE**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Baccalaureate	320	31,2	31,2	31,2
	Other Institutions for the Study of Languages	342	33,3	33,3	64,5
	University	365	35,5	35,5	100,0
	Total	1027	100,0	100,0	

**TABLE 32: Number of Participants per Institution**

Concerning the participants' level of English, no placement test was administered to the participants in order to determine the students' level of English prior to this survey. Therefore, as with the previous study, students are assigned a level of English according to an objective and external criterion: the course they are doing at the moment of the survey. Following this external criterion, 599 participants (58 per cent) are supposed to have an intermediate level (B1), 326 respondents (32 per cent) presumably have an upper-intermediate level of English (B2) and 102 of the contestants (around 10 per cent) are assumed to have an advanced level of English (C1-C2).

<b>LEVEL OF ENGLISH: External Criterion</b>		
<b>B1</b>	<b>B2</b>	<b>C1-C2</b>
599 (58%)	326 (32%)	102 (10%)

**TABLE 33:** Participants' Level of English (External Criterion)

Apart from that, students are asked to assess their own level of English in a question which says "I consider my level of English to be basic/intermediate/advanced." Considering the students' assessment of their own level of English, different percentages are obtained. According their views, most students (in particular, 34.5 per cent =354 students) state that their level of English was B2, followed by 27.3 per cent (280 participants) who maintain to have a B1 level; on the other hand, 18.4 per cent (189 people) consider themselves as having a relatively low level of English (A1 and A2 in the CEFR); 42 participants (4.1 per cent) stand irresolute concerning their level of English and leave this question blank; finally, 15.7 per cent (162 respondents) maintain that they have an advanced level (C1-C2). A preliminary analysis of the students' responses indicates that some students tend to overrate their level of English with the exception of some particular cases (i.e. some university students -18.4 per cent- do claim that they have a basic level). This overestimation of their level of English might be due to the fact that some students attend additional private lessons in other institutions in order to learn and improve their English language skills; therefore, they consider themselves as having a higher level of English. Anyway, the answers given by students concerning their level of English are presented in the chart below.

<b>LEVEL OF ENGLISH: Student's subjective view</b>				
<b>A1-A2</b>	<b>B1</b>	<b>B2</b>	<b>C1-C2</b>	<b>Unspecified</b>
189 (18.4%)	280 (27.3%)	354 (34.5%)	162 (15.7%)	42 (4.1%)

**TABLE 34:** Participants' Level of English (Student's Subjective View)

Apart from the participants' level of English, the respondents' stays in English-speaking countries could be another relevant aspect for this study. The subjects who have experienced English in real contexts and are familiar with signs<sup>72</sup> in the English-speaking world could have obtained better results in the questionnaire tasks (especially in Task 5). Data retrieved from the questionnaires reveal that 55 per cent of the respondents have never been to an English-speaking country while around 45 per cent visited an English-speaking country (most of them have been to the UK).

STAYS ABROAD					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	448	43,6	44,9	44,9
	No	550	53,6	55,1	100,0
	Total	998	97,2	100,0	
Missing		29	2,8		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 35: Stays in English-Speaking Countries**

The learners' motivation and attitudes are two other important factors which may affect language learning (Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Ellis, 1996; Norris-Holt, 2001). Asking students about their attitude towards English and their interest and self-study drives are good indicators of the learners' motivation towards the language. As regards their motivation/attitude, 84.3 per cent of the respondents claim that they like English a lot (43.7 per cent) or quite a lot (40.6 per cent); 15.7 per cent answer negatively to this question, that is, 4.2 per cent do not like English at all. Finally, 11.5 per cent say that they like English just a little.

THE RESPONDENTS' MOTIVATION/LIKING TOWARDS ENGLISH					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	A lot	445	43,3	43,7	43,7
	Quite a lot	414	40,3	40,6	84,3
	Little	117	11,4	11,5	95,8
	Nothing	43	4,2	4,2	100,0
	Total	1019	99,2	100,0	
Missing		8	,8		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 36: Motivation towards English**

<sup>72</sup> Stays in English-speaking countries are particularly relevant for the completion of the questionnaire. Students who have visited England are likely to know the meaning of certain English signs included in Task 5 because they probably found them at some point (e.g. *follow diversion*, *police notice*, etc)

Regarding the students' interest in the study of English by themselves, the data collected are quite positive. Only 13.5 per cent of the respondents state that they do not read, speak or listen to English except for the classroom tasks; the remaining percentage corresponds to those respondents who assert that they sometimes read, speak or listen to English whenever they could.

SELF-STUDY/INTEREST					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	443	43,1	43,6	43,6
	<b>No</b>	137	13,3	<b>13,5</b>	57,1
	Sometimes	436	42,5	42,9	100,0
	Total	1016	98,9	100,0	
Missing		11	1,1		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 37: Interest in English**

As mentioned earlier, this dissertation focuses on the analysis of the lexical component of the English language. The importance of vocabulary has been widely recognised in the field of language learning (Nation, 1990; Ellis, 1994; Singleton, 1999; Schmitt, 2000; Bogaards and Laufer, 2004); thus, it is interesting to know whether the participants in this study consider this component of the language important or not. According to their answers, 98.6 per cent of the respondents answer that vocabulary is an essential component in the learning of any foreign language; 69.6 per cent of whom maintain that it is very important to know the lexicon of the foreign language; the other extreme of the cline is composed by 1.4 per cent of the individuals who reply that vocabulary is not really relevant for the learning of a foreign language.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF VOCABULARY					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	A lot	706	68,7	69,6	69,6
	Quite a lot	295	28,7	29,0	98,6
	Little	12	1,2	1,2	99,8
	Nothing	2	,2	,2	100,0
	Total	1015	98,8	100,0	
Missing		12	1,2		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 38: Importance of Vocabulary**

In sum, the participants in this study can be regarded as a representative sample group of English learners in Spain. The fact of having different age groups and different types of students gives more variety, validity and reliability to our dataset, thus, being more representative and comprehensive of the whole target population. The analysis of their answers to the questionnaire will allow us to draw general patterns and conclusions about the difficulties that Spanish learners have in the decoding of English messages containing false friends.

#### **4.4. Research instrument: The Questionnaire**

After setting the aims of this second study and talking about the participants, it seems necessary to talk about the research instrument used in Study II: the questionnaire. This tool is considered to be an appropriate research instrument which facilitates the analysis of the students' receptive knowledge of some English words. The whole questionnaire is shown in Appendix 1 of this dissertation (pp. 455). However, I am going to explain the basic principles behind this research instrument, its sections, the activities proposed and the sequencing of the questions proposed gradually.

##### *4.4.1. The Questionnaire Basics: Phrasing and Sequencing*

Concerning the basic principles, the wording and the structure of the questionnaire (Bloomer, 2010), I searched for clarity in the expression and tidiness in the organisation. While thinking about giving clear instructions, I decided to write the questions in the students' mother tongue as a way of removing any possible complexity in the questions. As the questionnaire has a clear participant in mind (Spanish learners of English), writing the headings in Spanish was the easiest way to avoid any problem derived from the misunderstanding of the instructions.

As regards the structure of the questionnaire, the questionnaire starts with a short introductory text which provides participants with some general background information about the aim and purpose of the questionnaire. Explicit allusions to false friends are avoided so that learners may not feel biased in their responses. That is the reason why the title of the questionnaire *Concept and Interpretation of Lookalikes* is not specific, clear and concrete and the two separate parts integrating it are not given a particular name, they are simply marked as Part I and Part II.

Right after this general title, respondents are asked about some personal details which might be relevant in this research (age, level, nationality, motivation); then the questionnaire continues with the different activities and questions. Closed and open questions are present throughout the questionnaire. Closed questions are more controlled and require less time and effort from the respondent. These are abundant and take different shapes in this questionnaire: yes/no questions, multiple-choice activities, ranked questions or true/ false tasks. Open questions have also been inserted, although to a lesser extent, since they require greater effort and more time from the respondent. Most of these open questions are associated with closed questions; they are in fact their extension (i.e. students are given the opportunity to optionally add an explanation or justification for their answers). There is an activity which can be said to be more clearly open in its nature: activity 5 which elicits the students' own concepts and understanding of false friends through the translation of some English notices.

Broadly speaking, the questionnaire consists of two clearly distinct parts: in the first part, learners are asked to complete six different activities through which students show their understanding of false friends; in the second part, learners are exposed to a number of questions where students consciously reflect on the phenomenon of false friendship and explain their views and opinions on the topic.

As regards the format and printing of the questionnaire, I was really careful with the questionnaire layout and tried to set clear boundaries between the activities. I printed the questionnaire with two pages per face sheet. In this way, it appeared to be more bearable, less time-consuming and it also saved paper. Questions had a space for their answer right after them and the activities were not excessively long in order to avoid boredom and automaticity in the learners' responses. I did not want the questionnaire to be tiring or too boring; for this reason, a variety of different activities were included. Images, definitions, collocations, sentences, real notices and a constructed piece of news were introduced to test the learners' recognition and interpretation of these lexical items; this at the same time ensured reliability.

The next section describes the type of questions and activities proposed in the questionnaire.



#### *4.4.2. Tasks: Activity Types, Aims and Purposes*

The questionnaire in this survey aims at being a reliable, valid and practical research instrument which would allow me to measure the learners' receptive knowledge of English false friends. That is the reason why I limited the number of activities to the minimum in order to be practical and stick to the point and I combined different types of questions (open and closed) and tasks to give variety and reliability to the questionnaire. The different types of activities used in the questionnaire are well-known to the learners; thus, the tasks included are commonly used in EFL classrooms.

As abovementioned, the final draft of the questionnaire is divided into two main parts. The first part of the questionnaire consists of 6 main tasks designed to look into the learners' level of recognition, knowledge and understanding of false friends; the second part contains 7 main questions on the teaching techniques and learning difficulties of false friends; they are, in fact, thirteen tasks which have been all well-fitted in three printed pages. The different parts, aims, activities and questions of the final draft of this questionnaire are explained and illustrated in the following pages.

The survey starts with a cover page where students are given the title of the survey, a code<sup>73</sup> and some brief instructions about what participants should do, the time they should spend filling the questionnaire (between 15 and 30 minutes) and the reason why I am asking them to fill it in (research purposes). This first page also inquires into some of the learners' basic personal details and ensures the confidentiality of these data by means of a footnote. Variables which could be relevant in this study, such as gender, mother tongue, level of English and attitude towards English are considered in this initial page. Although the aim of this study is to look into the interpretation of false friends by Spanish learners of English in general, regardless of sex and attitude towards English, these variables might have an impact on the results and they were added just in case I needed to look into them at some point.

Issues such as mother tongue were included in order to filter out the questionnaires filled in by non-native speakers of Spanish (there were some Erasmus and international students in certain groups). Although the universities, colleges, language centres and highschoools in which the questionnaires were distributed are

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<sup>73</sup> All the questionnaires had a code on the top right hand side corner; this code identified the number of questionnaires that had been handed in and informed me about any missing questionnaires.

located in Spain, some students came from other countries, such as Italy, Poland, France or England whose mother tongues is not Spanish; therefore, they set themselves clearly apart from my research interest thus being excluded from the analysis.

Apart from this, the questionnaire includes issues which may be relevant in the interpretation of the results, such as knowledge of other languages, the learners' assessment of their own level of English, and the students' enthusiasm towards English and their stays abroad which are particularly pertinent to the subject matter of motivation and contact with English outside the classroom.

This first page and its main features are shown in Figure 27 below.

**Title:** *Concept and Interpretation of Lookalikes.*  
Brief **introduction** after it.

Questionnaire  
Code number

Código:

Name and Email address (optional)  
**Nationality** (compulsory)

Gender, Age and Mother Tongue

Knowledge of other languages

Learners' self-rating of their **level** of English

Stays in English speaking countries

The learner's **interest** in English

Ensuring **confidentiality**

**FIGURE 27: Questionnaire: Cover Page**

**CONCEPTO E INTERPRETACIÓN DE TÉRMINOS SEMEJANTES**  
Este cuestionario ha sido elaborado con el fin de identificar las dificultades que te plantean ciertas palabras inglesas. Tus respuestas constituirán una parte importante de mi tesis doctoral. Cálculo que te llevará entre 15 y 30 minutos completarlo. ¡Muchas gracias por tu colaboración!

**DATOS PERSONALES<sup>1</sup>**

NOMBRE (opcional): \_\_\_\_\_

LUGAR DE NACIMIENTO: \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL/ TELÉFONO DE CONTACTO (opcional): \_\_\_\_\_

1. SEXO

Mujer
Hombre

2. EDAD

Entre 12 y 16
Entre 17 y 18
Entre 19 y 21
Entre 22 y 23
Mayor de 24

3. LENGUA MATERNA

Galego
Español
Inglés
Otras (especifica cual): _____

4. CONOCIMIENTO DE OTRAS LENGUAS ☐ Sí ☐ No ☐

Indica cuáles: \_\_\_\_\_

5. ESTUDIOS QUE ESTÁ REALIZANDO

BACHILLERATO
CCM
ETU
UNIVERSIDAD
Otras (especifica): _____

6. CURSO

Primero
Segundo
Tercero
Quinto
Sexto/Septimo/Octavo

7. Considero que MI NIVEL DE INGLÉS es...

Básico 1
Básico 2
Intermedio 1
Intermedio 2
Avanzado 1
Avanzado 2

8. ESTANCIAS EN PAÍSES DE HABLA INGLESA ☐ Sí ☐ No ☐

Lugar y duración de la estancia/s: \_\_\_\_\_

**MI ACTITUD ANTE EL INGLÉS**

9. ¿Me gusta el inglés?

Mucho ☐ Bastante ☐ Poco ☐ Nada ☐

10. ¿Escucho, leo o hablo inglés cuando puedo?

Sí ☐ No ☐ A veces ☐

11. El vocabulario es importante en el aprendizaje de un idioma

Mucho ☐ Bastante ☐ Poco ☐ Nada ☐

<sup>1</sup> Los datos facilitados tienen carácter confidencial y se utilizarán con fines de investigación científica. Si tienes alguna pregunta, por favor ponte en contacto conmigo en el siguiente correo electrónico: [luis10@yahoo.com](mailto:luis10@yahoo.com)

After some basic questions on the participants' personal profiles, the subjects are presented with the different activities of the questionnaire.

I will next describe the main features and characteristics of the tasks contained in the survey.

The first task is a **word recognition** activity where students are required to choose the picture that best describes/depicts the meaning of the English word on the left. This is a non-verbal measure of word comprehension which shows how language learners process these lexical items when they find them as part of their input. A *distractor* was included in this first task. In this case, the distractor was selected among different cognate words between Spanish and English which still share the same meanings in both languages. The word *camera* which has the same meaning as Spanish *cámara* was chosen as the distracting element of this activity. The function of this “true friend” was to avoid the students’ quick identification that the words presented were false friends. Moreover, the inclusion of a comprehensive word such as *crime*, which may refer to *any illegal act* or any type of *offense* from a native speaker’s perspective, may be revealing for a general understanding of the final results. The fact that students are inclined to choose the first picture, the second one or both of them will allow us to identify the learners’ understanding of this word and would suggest if learners are being influenced by the Spanish notion of *crime* “murder” or if they are familiar with the broad nature of the English term. The fact that learners opt for one or the other picture could definitely tell us whether learners are processing this word through their mother tongue (Spanish) or through the foreign language (English). The learners’ responses to this activity will indicate the L1 influence on the interpretation of the L2 word and will ultimately shed some more light on the organisation of the mental lexicon.<sup>74</sup> Although I am aware of the fact that this first task might cause controversy due to the number of possibilities presented (two), they are considered to be sufficient to assess the students’ understanding of these words in a clear way.



















The design and contents of the first activity are shown in Figure 28. Some informative text boxes have been added to Figure 28 so as to explain the most important aspects of this first task. These text boxes show what students are expected to do (e.g. select the correct picture or pictures), they point at the inclusion of the distractor (the word *camera*) and the different words studied, together with the images proposed in this activity.

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<sup>74</sup> By organisation of the mental lexicon is meant how words are stored in the long-term memory. The traditional debate in lexical representation studies focuses on a discussion that tries to determine whether bilinguals have two independent language specific stocks for each language or whether there is a single stock that is shared by all the languages.

Task 1: Tick the right picture/s

Actividad 1. Marca con una X la imagen que mejor ilustre el significado de las palabras en inglés.

11. CAMERA	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
12. COLLAR	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
13. CONDUCTOR	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
14. CRIME	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
15. EMBARRASSED	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
16. INHABITED	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
17. LECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
18. ROPE	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
19. QUIET	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	

The distractor word *camera*

Introducing different types of FF

*Crime*, a comprehensive English term

**FIGURE 28:** Questionnaire: Part I, Task 1

Tasks number 2, 3, 4 and 5 (Figure 29, pp. 327) assess the learners' knowledge about the meaning and syntagmatic properties of several English false friends. In these four different tasks, students are asked to choose the corresponding definitions and collocations, to decide the English word that best fits the sentence context provided and to translate some English notices and signs containing false friends. These activities are

representative of the diversity of tasks in this questionnaire. Most of them are closed questions except for the translation in activity 5 (although it is quite controlled, students must make the effort to come up with the best translation). As mentioned earlier, closed and open questions are combined in order to expose students to different types of activities and avoid boredom and automaticity in the learners' responses (e.g. true/false questions, Yes/No questions or multiple choice tasks). The second task is in the form of a true/false activity where students should show if they are acquainted with the word provided and if learners can retrieve its English **meaning**. In this word identification task, students should say whether the definitions given are correct or not. This activity will definitely delve into the students' semantic knowledge of English false friends, such as *assist*, *casualty*, *college*, *mayor* or *firm*.

The third activity focuses on **word collocates** and is in the form of a Yes/No question which somewhat measures the learners' intuitions about the grammaticality of some phrases containing 10 different false friends. The participants' answers would reflect the learners' semantic and syntactic knowledge of these lexical items and their command of the English language. This task aims at examining the students' linguistic judgements about real English phrases (e.g. *fine wine*, *summer camp*) and the influence of some Spanish-based syntagmatic associations in the use of particular English false friends (e.g. *realise an investigation*, *appoint with a gun*).

Activity 4 presents four pairs of well-known false friends (*sensible-sensitive*, *career-degree*, *exit-success*, *casual-eventual*) in a clear **linguistic context**. Students are presented with typical examples of false friends and are asked to underline the word which best fits the context provided. This helps us determine the students' pragmatic knowledge of these words and their conceptual discrimination when confronted with confusing word pairs.

Task 5 is an example of an elicited translation which presents different types of **notices** and **signs** which can be found in Britain on an **everyday basis**. Learners are asked to translate the notices into their first language after thinking about where they can find this type of signs and what the messages on these signs mean. This assists in determining the learners' receptive knowledge of these particular false friends which are highly frequent in everyday contexts. Apart from this, the participants' translations are relevant and show how these words are represented in the bilingual lexicon and which of the meanings (the L1 or the L2 semantic representations) is activated when reading these signs.

The following figure (Figure 29) briefly summarises what learners should do in activities from 2 to 5 and shows what these activities look like in the questionnaire.

Task 2: Put a tick (✓) or a cross (✗) next to the following definitions

Actividad 2. Indica si las siguientes definiciones son correctas (✓) o no (✗):	✓	✗
1. ASSIST: To be present at		
4. CASUALTY: injured or died in an accident		
5. COLLEGE: A public school of primary education		
6. MAYOR: The chief executive official of a city, village, or town		
7. FIRM: Signature. Your name written in your own handwriting		

Task 3: Mark whether the following collocations are correct or not in English

Actividad 3. Indica si las siguientes frases son correctas (✓) o incorrectas (✗):	✓	✗
8. To accommodate a friend		
9. Bread and meat are basic commodities		
10. A blank expression on your face		
11. A summer camp		
12. A water pipe		
13. Fine wine		
14. Appoint with a gun		
15. Locals to rent		
16. Realize an investigation		
17. Give someone a good notice		

Task 4: Underline the word that best fits the context

Actividad 4. Subraya la palabra más adecuada al contexto:
18. My grandma is very SENSITIVE/ SENSIBLE; she cries very easily.
19. I do not want to study a university CAREER/DEGREE.
20. Her last book was a big SUCCESS/EXIT.
21. It is expensive to hire CASUAL/ EVENTUAL workers.

Task 5: After figuring out a situational context for these signs, translate them.



Actividad 5. Te presento algunos carteles que puedes encontrar en el mundo. Piensa en qué lugar los puedes encontrar (en una tienda, envase de producto, carretera, aparcamiento) y cuáles es su significado.
29.  Contexto: en una tienda, envase de producto, carretera, aparcamiento)..... Traducción:.....
40.  Contexto: en una tienda, envase de producto, carretera, aparcamiento)..... Traducción:.....

FIGURE 29: Questionnaire: Part I, Tasks 2 to 5

In order to finish with the variety of receptive tasks, the questionnaire includes a reading comprehension activity in the form of a multiple choice task. In this activity, learners read a short text and answer seven questions about the contents of the text. Students are advised to pay special attention to the words in bold in order to choose the most appropriate option of the three provided. Considering the suggestions of the participants in the pilot study, the three alternatives are provided in Spanish. This indeed

gives us a better view of the students' real understanding of the text. Answers to these questions will allow us to determine if the presence of false friends really leads students to the misunderstanding of the actual meaning of a text in English, and if the context of occurrence in which the false friend appears helps learners interpret and understand these lexical items in the correct way.

Task 6: Read the text below and choose the correct answer

**Actividad 6.** Lee el siguiente párrafo y elige la respuesta/s correcta/s (a, b o c) de acuerdo con lo que dice el texto. Las palabras en negrita te dan las pistas para la respuesta.

The text

Famous **solicitor** Harry Davies is being accused of **molesting** a 45-year-old **professor**. The solicitor was arrested in his house located in a well-known **suburb** of London. At the moment of the detention, he was **casually dressed** and **pretended** to be relaxed. However, a simple conversation with him was enough for the police to realize that he was a **bizarre** person. Now the solicitor is being treated in a psychiatric hospital.

Multiple choice questions

- |  |  |   |   |
|--|--|---|---|
| <p>44. ¿Qué profesión tiene Harry?</p> <p>a) Conductor<br/>b) Abogado<br/>c) Solicitante</p>   | <p>45. ¿De qué se le acusa?</p> <p>a) De molestar a una persona de 45 años<br/>b) De discutir con un persona de 45 años<br/>c) De abusar sexualmente de una persona de 45 años</p> | <p>46. ¿Cuál es la profesión de la persona de 45 años?</p> <p>a) Maestra (escuela)<br/>b) Un/a aprendiz<br/>c) Profesora de Universidad</p> | <p>47. ¿Dónde está situada la casa de Harry?</p> <p>a) En un suburbio<br/>b) En una zona residencial<br/>c) En el centro de Londres</p> |
| <p>48. "At the moment of the detention, he was <b>casually dressed</b>" significa que "en el momento de la detención ..."</p> <p>a) Estaba vestido por casualidad<br/>b) Llevaba ropa informal/casual<br/>c) Estaba disfrazado</p> | <p>49. He <b>pretended to be relaxed</b> significa que...</p> <p>a) Fingía estar relajado<br/>b) Intentaba estar relajado<br/>c) Estaba relajado</p>                               | <p>50. A <b>Bizarre person</b> es...</p> <p>a) Valiente<br/>b) Extraño<br/>c) Enfermo</p>   |   |

**FIGURE 30:** Questionnaire: Part I, Task 6

After these activities of Part I which examine the learners' interpretation of false friends, the questionnaire introduces a second part (Part II); this is concerned with the learners' views and with their learning attitude towards false friends. I will now move on to describe the questions posed in the second part of the questionnaire.

In Part II of the questionnaire, learners are encouraged to reflect on the linguistic phenomenon of false friends in a conscious way while facing questions which tackle different issues, such as the definition of the phenomenon or its treatment in the classroom. The first five questions of this second part (Figure 31, pp. 330) focus on the notion of false friends, on their importance and number, and on how teachers and textbooks treat this topic in an EFL context. I will explain the formulation of these five direct questions in the following pages.

The first question in the second part of the questionnaire deepens into the learners' understanding of the **concept of false friends**. Participants are asked to choose

the definition which best suits this label and the explanation which best describes this phenomenon. Students are given three different options: a first one which corresponds to the notion of polysemy, a second one which is the correct one and a last option which refers to the concept of collocation. The learners' replies will give us an indication whether students are acquainted with and have heard about this topic before and whether they exactly know what it is all about.

The second question seeks to determine the students' view on **the importance of false friends** in their learning of the English language. This question invites students to explain why they consider false friends important or irrelevant. In both cases, participants are asked to explain why they consider these English words worthy or not worthy of attention in the English classroom.

Question 3 was designed to examine the students' judgement about the **amount of false friends** in the English language. We will see here if learners are aware of the amount of false friends that they have to cope with. As Van Roey (1988), Meara (1983), Granger (1996) contend (and I agree with them), there are more false friends than we can actually think of. In addition to this, this question asks learners to provide some examples of false friends, the false friends quoted here will provide us with some clues on the false friends which are normally taught in the English classroom.

Question number 4 prompts students to identify the **techniques** that language teachers use to present English false friends in the class. In particular, participants are asked about different techniques such as the use of word lists, sample sentences, definitions, synonyms/ antonyms, dictionary use, textbooks, drawings and flashcards for the presentation and practice of these words in the classroom. In this question, students will also say how often teachers resort to each of these techniques.

Question number 5 is concerned with **textbooks**. An informal observation of classroom textbooks indicates that references to false friends are scarce. This question aims at knowing whether learners are aware of the presence of false friends in their coursebooks or not. They are asked to pinpoint specific sections and explicit allusions to these words in their textbooks or to express their opinion about the possibility of including false friends in case their textbooks do not pay attention to these words. Answers to this question will allow us to find out about what is the preferred format for the presentation and practice of these words in different textbooks. In addition to this, we will also discover how much attention is given to these lexical items in EFL teaching materials.



The first five questions in the second part of the questionnaire are shown in Figure 31 below.

**PARTE II:**

**1)** Cuando hablamos de falsos amigos (false friends, en inglés), nos referimos ...

<input type="checkbox"/>	A una palabra con varios significados (e.g. get)
<input type="checkbox"/>	A palabras parecidas en dos idiomas que tienen significados diferentes (e.g. case y caso)
<input type="checkbox"/>	A palabras que suelen aparecer juntas (e.g. go home)

**Question 1: Review of the notion of FF**

**2)** Considero que los falsos amigos son ...

<input type="checkbox"/>	Muy importantes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Importantes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Poco importantes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nada importantes
--------------------------	-----------------	--------------------------	-------------	--------------------------	------------------	--------------------------	------------------

Razone tu respuesta: .....

**Question 2: Importance of FF**

**3)** ¿Consideras que existen muchos falsos amigos en inglés?

<input type="checkbox"/>	SI	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
--------------------------	----	--------------------------	----

Pon ejemplos (máximo 5)

**Question 3: Number and examples of FF**

**4)** ¿Cómo se suelen enseñar los falsos amigos en el aula?

	Nunca	Raras veces	A veces	Frecuentemente	Siempre
4.1) Con un listado y su traducción	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.2) Con ejemplos acentuados	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.3) Con su definición	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.4) Con sinónimos o antónimos	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.5) Con uso de diccionario	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.6) A través del libro de texto	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.7) Con dibujos que ilustren el significado	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.8) Otros (por favor, especifica).....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Question 4: Teaching techniques**

**5)** ¿Tu libro de texto dedica alguna sección a los falsos amigos?

<input type="checkbox"/>	SI	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
--------------------------	----	--------------------------	----

Si tu respuesta es negativa, ¿consideras que se debieran incluir?

**Question 5: The presence of FF in students' books**

**FIGURE 31:** Questionnaire: Part II, Questions 1 to 5

This questionnaire contains two more questions: question 6 and 7 which aim at examining the learning strategies used by students to approach false friends and the problems that these words may pose in EFL learning (Figure 32, pp. 332).

On the one hand, question 6 focuses on the learning techniques that students use to learn and gain knowledge of false friends. It intends to examine the **techniques used by students** to register and recall false friends. It aims at determining if the participants in this study tend to learn words in isolation, in sentences; if they make associations

with other words they already know (synonyms, antonyms, homonyms, hypernyms, etc); if they pay attention to the real use of these words and tend to look up the meaning and use of English false friends in (monolingual or bilingual) dictionaries; and if they connect words with particular situational settings or if it is just the meaning of the word what matters to them. The learners' answers to this question will ultimately shed some light on the strategies used by students to learn these words and the way learners normally organise their learning of vocabulary.

On the other hand, question 7 inquires into the main problems and difficulties that learners have to confront when they need to understand and use English false friends. This question is divided into 9 sub-statements whose contents and aims are explained below.

The first 5 statements (from 7.1 to 7.5) deal with the main difficulties learners may encounter in reading and listening due to the presence of these misleading words. Statement 7.1 addresses the **influence of the learners' mother tongue** in the interpretation of unknown words. Answers to this statement would indicate if the learners' L1 is so powerful as to influence the interpretation of a L2 word or if, by contrast, they avoid thinking in the L1 when confronting the L2; statement 7.2. aims at identifying if students tend to get blocked when they do not know a word or if they resort to different **communicative strategies** to interpret messages that contain unknown lexical items; statement 7.3. asks about the **importance of learning false friends consciously** since false friends may go unnoticed when the context does not make their meaning clear (as in for instance, *The politician was clearly intoxicated*); statement 7.4. intends to ask students if false friends can really hinder **message understanding** (due to their misleading nature), especially when there are several false friends one after another.

The remaining statements (from 7.6 to 7.9) ask students about the main drawbacks that false friends posed at the level of spoken and written production. Statement 7.6 inquires into the learners' conscious **influence of the L1** on their productive use of the L2; Statement 7.7 is concerned with the **learners' focus on form** and their fear of making mistakes when they speak or write in English. Answers to this statement could reveal the students' fussiness towards accuracy and inhibition towards trying new things in the foreign language; statement 7.8 deals with the **learners strategies** and if they like experimenting with language, taking risks and trying out new words to succeed in communicating; statement 7.9 looks at the **students' views on the learnability of false**

**friends.** It aims at finding out the students' views as to whether false friends are difficult items to learn, grasp, apprehend and use correctly or not.

**Question 6: Learning techniques**

6) ¿Cómo aprendes o estudias los falsos amigos?

	Nunca	Raras veces	A veces	Frecuentemente	Siempre
6.1) Haciendo listas con su traducción					
6.2) Asociando su significado con un dibujo/imagen					
6.3) Buscando un ejemplo claro					
6.4) Escribiendo un sinónimo o un antónimo					
6.5) Relaciona la palabra con una situación					
6.6) Píjandome en su uso en textos, conversaciones,...					
6.7) Consultando el diccionario					
6.8) Usando usos de esa palabra en Internet					
6.9) Preguntando a un hablante nativo					
6.10) Otros (específicos):.....					

**Question 7: Difficulties of FF in production and reception**

7) ¿Cuáles son las principales dificultades que te plantean los falsos amigos a la hora de comprender o expresar un mensaje en lengua inglesa?

**A nivel de comprensión....(lectura y escucha)**

	SI	NO
7.1) En general, cuando no conozco una palabra en un texto, deduzco su significado basándome en mi lengua materna.		
7.2) Tengo dificultades para entender mensajes escritos y orales que contengan falsos amigos o palabras que no conozco.		
7.3) El conocimiento de los falsos amigos es importante porque en ocasiones el contexto no nos aclara su significado real.		
7.4) No entiendo una frase como: 'I urge <del>you</del> <del>that</del> <del>to</del> <del>reply</del> ' a pesar de que tiene palabras similares al español.		
7.5) Otras dificultades (específicas):.....		

**A nivel de producción....(escritura y habla)**

	SI	NO
7.6) En general, la lengua materna me influye negativamente a la hora de expresarme en inglés.		
7.7) Me preocupa cometer errores gramaticales o léxicos cuando hablo/escribo en otro idioma.		
7.8) A veces utilizo falsos amigos en inglés de forma incorrecta como una estrategia para mantener la conversación.		
7.9) Me parece que los falsos amigos son palabras confusas, difíciles de aprender, asimilar y usar correctamente.		
7.10) Otras dificultades (específicas):.....		

Si tienes alguna duda sobre el tema o sugerencia acerca de este cuestionario, por favor escríbelo aquí:

.....

.....

.....

¡GRACIAS POR TU OPINION!

**Thanks to participants/ Space for their opinions and suggestions**

**FIGURE 32: Questionnaire: Part II, Questions 6 and 7**

At the end of the questionnaire, I included a space for comments and suggestions. In this space, participants are encouraged to give their feedback on the design, administration and tasks of the questionnaire and they are also prompted to indicate if they would make some changes in the survey and if they would add or delete something. The learners' answers to all these activities and questions helped me obtain enough evidence<sup>75</sup> of the students' understanding of false friends in different ways.

<sup>75</sup> Providing students with a clear set of responses might have led student to answer some questions at random. In order to avoid false results, students were asked to leave blank the answers they do not know.

### 4.5. Procedure

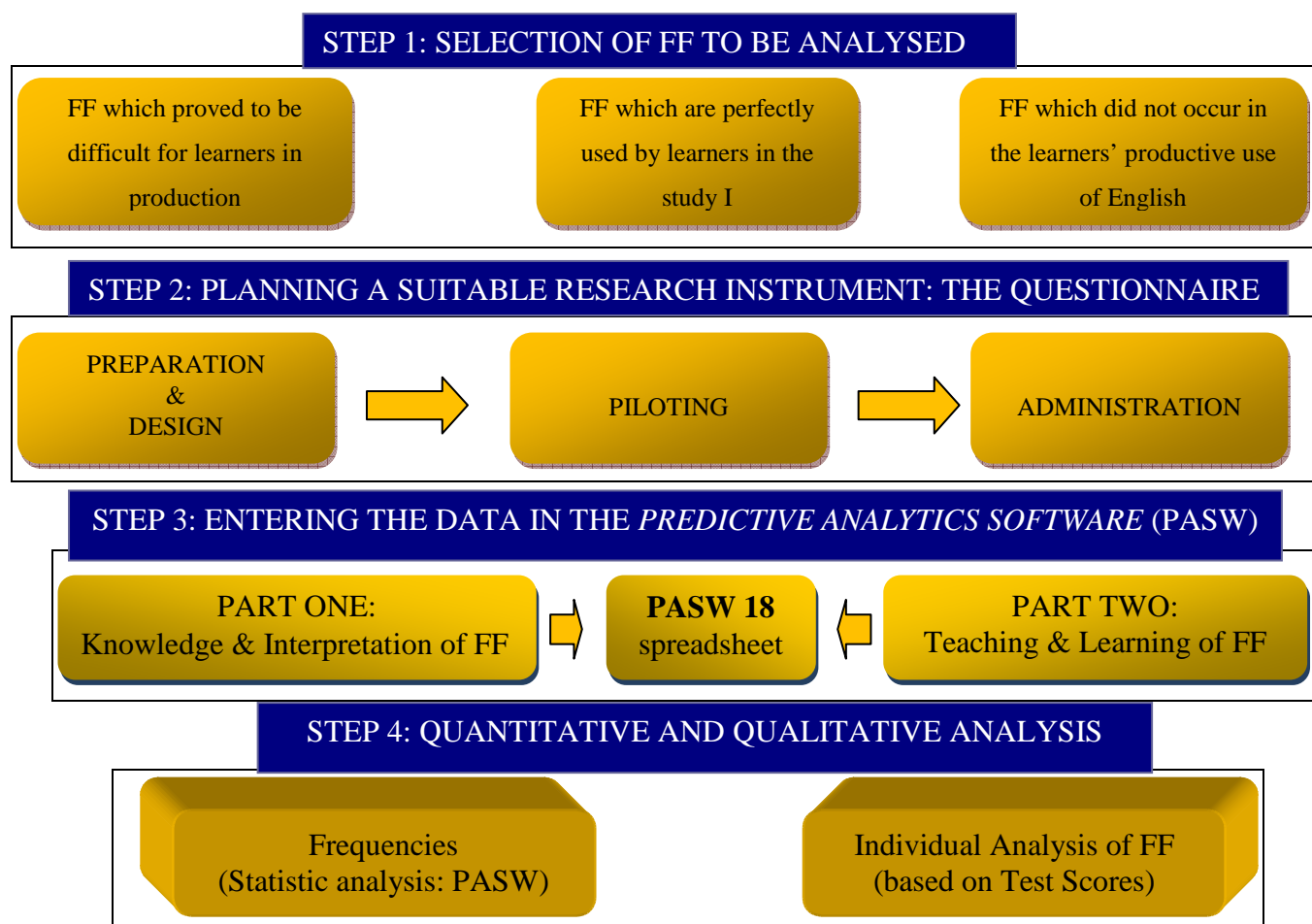
In order to provide a satisfactory answer to the research questions posed at the beginning of this study (see *section 4.2.*, pp. 310), it was mandatory to devise a suitable research strategy which allowed me to collect and analyse the necessary data to carry out this survey. The research strategy followed can be summarised in the following four main stages:

- 1) Firstly, after delimiting the scope of this second study (false friends in L2 reception), there was a need to select a sensible number of false friends for practical reasons (manageability and length).
- 2) Secondly, it was essential to look for, think about, plan and develop a suitable data collection method which could allow us to gather data for this survey. The possibilities of including activities in various forms offered by questionnaires led me to consider that this method was the most appropriate to elicit the necessary data for the present study. This second stage included the preparation, piloting and administration of the questionnaire.
- 3) After the administration and collection process, the replies obtained were numerically coded and manually entered in a spreadsheet for a basic statistical analysis of frequencies. The data gathered were edited and processed with the *Predictive Analytics Software (PASW Statistics 18)*.<sup>76</sup>
- 4) Finally, in a fourth stage, the qualitative and the quantitative analysis were performed and the results from these analyses were carefully explored in order to draw some basic conclusions on the questions that guided the elaboration of this study.

Figure 33 (next page) outlines the methodological organisation of this study which will be further explained in the succeeding sections.

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<sup>76</sup> PASW Statistics 18 (formerly SPSS, that is, *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences*) was first developed by Norman Nie and released in 1968. For further information on this software and its use in this survey, see *section 4.5.3.*, pp. 341.

**FIGURE 33:** Methodological Procedure Followed in Study II

The selection of false friends for analysis, the questionnaire design and the results drawn from this survey are explained in more detail in the following sections.

#### *4.5.1. Stage I: Selection of Relevant False Friends*

Regarding the selection of false friends for analysis, several issues concerning the questionnaire length and its practicality led me to disregard some of the 100 FF in the original list. The inclusion of the whole set of 100 false friends would make the questionnaire impractical and difficult for students to manage. In this respect, it is necessary to point out that the results of the corpus-based survey played a significant role in the choice of the items for this questionnaire. As this second study comes to complement the study presented earlier, the items in the questionnaire were selected on

the basis of their high level of difficulty, their lack of difficulty and their non-occurrence in the corpora examined in Study I; thus, some of these false friends proved to be difficult for learners in their production (e.g. *locals*, *molest*, *commodities*, *casual* or *career*), some other FF were observed to be perfectly acquired and used (e.g. *rope*, *carpet* or *blank*) and other false friends did not occur in the learners' productive use of English (e.g. *collar*, *conductor*, *diversion*, *motorist*, *preservative*, and *solicitor*). In this way, it is possible to compare the use of certain FF in production and their interpretation in L2 reception and to reflect on the learners' passive knowledge and understanding of some lexical items which did not occur in the corpora. In the end, the questionnaire incorporated the following 40 false friends.

▶ ACCOMMODATE	▶ CONDUCTOR	▶ MAYOR
▶ APPOINT	▶ CRIME	▶ MOLEST
▶ ASSIST	▶ DIVERSION	▶ MOTORIST
▶ BIZARRE	▶ EMBARRASSED	▶ NOTICE
▶ BLANK	▶ ESTATE	▶ PIPE
▶ CAMP	▶ EVENTUAL	▶ PRESERVATIVES
▶ CAREER	▶ EXIT	▶ PRETEND
▶ CARPET	▶ FINE	▶ PROFESSOR
▶ CASUAL	▶ FIRM	▶ QUIET
▶ CASUALTY	▶ INHABITED	▶ REALISE
▶ COLLAR	▶ LARGE	▶ ROPE
▶ COLLEGE	▶ LECTURE	▶ SENSIBLE
▶ COMMODITIES	▶ LOCALS	▶ SUBURB
		▶ SOLICITOR

**TABLE 39:** False Friends Included in the Questionnaire

As can be easily gathered from the inventory of false friends in Table 39 above, the items under examination have been all selected from the list of basic FF presented in the first part with a new addition, the noun *suburb*<sup>77</sup> (although not recurrently mentioned in the specialised literature on false friends, its frequency is ranked in position 5422 in Kilgarriff's lemmatised word list). The inclusion of the noun *suburb* in this second study was also motivated by Gairns and Redman's reference to it (1986:3). These scholars maintain that the interpretation of an utterance such as *I feel sorry for*

<sup>77</sup> This noun comes from Old French *suburbe* or Latin *suburbium* (*sub-* 'near to' + *urbs*, *urb-* 'city').

*people who live in the suburbs*<sup>78</sup> might vary substantially depending on who is producing it and who is interpreting it (native speakers vs. L2 speakers). According to them, the noun **suburb** is the key to understand this sentence correctly. This noun refers to a residential area outside the city centre in English. However, the meaning of this sentence can be altered if a Spanish person interprets or utters this sentence in English. Then this word can be used or interpreted on the basis of Spanish *suburbio*, meaning “shantytown.” In fact, it is very likely that most Spanish people take this noun as a synonym of shantytown, use it and interpret it as such. By including this noun in Study II, I will try to support or reject Gairns and Redman’s statement about this noun with some evidence. The interpretation of this noun will be explored through the learners’ responses to the reading comprehension task in activity 6 of the questionnaire, Part I (see Appendix 1, pp. 460).

In sum, the false friends explored in this second part are lexical items pertaining to different frequency bands (Table 40); 22.50 per cent of the items are among the 1,000 most frequent words (1k), 20.00 per cent of the items belong to the 2,000 most common English words (2k), 15.00 per cent are included in the Academic Word List (AWL) and 42.50 per cent are included in other frequency lists (*Longman Communication 3000 Word List* or Kilgarriff’s word list). The frequencies of these lexical items are specified below.

<b>1k types:</b> [9= 22.50%]	appoint, college, fine, large, locals, motorist, notice (n), realise, sensible,
<b>2k types:</b> [8=20.00%]	camp, collar, crime, firm, pipe, pretend, quiet, rope,
<b>AWL types:</b> [6=15.00%]	accommodate, assist, commodity, estate, eventual, lecture
<b>OFF types:</b> [17=42.50%]	bizarre (5369), blank (s2), career (s2, w2), carpet (s3, w3), casual (3819), casualty (3945), conductor (6171), diversion, embarrassed (s3), exit (s3), inhabited, mayor (4357), molest, preservative (w3), professor (s3, w3), solicitor (s3, w2), suburb (5422)

**TABLE 40:** Distribution of False Friends into Frequency Bands (Vocabprofiler)

<sup>78</sup> The most straightforward interpretation of this utterance is that the speaker feels sorry for the people in the suburbs (“residential areas”) because they have a rather stilted atmosphere; although this utterance can be interpreted in an ironic way. The speaker’s intention might to express the idea that s/he does not feel sorry for the people who live in the suburbs since they may enjoy a better life than people who live in the city centre. At any rate, the word *suburbs* refer to a residential area in English.

The distribution of these items into frequency bands indicates that there are false friends of many different types. Needless to say, some of the items in the list represent curious cases of false friends (e.g. *preservative*, *motorist*, *molest*, *suburb*, *collar*, etc). The inclusion of these peculiar words helps us determine how Spanish learners process and interpret these lexical items through their answers to the questionnaire.

#### 4.5.2. Stage II: Questionnaire Design, Piloting and Administration

After setting the aims of this second study and determining the lexical false friends to be analysed, the next stage was to design the questionnaire and make it a good research instrument for the analysis of the students' receptive knowledge of these high-frequency English words. Different factors were considered and a series of steps were followed in order to create and design the questionnaire.

First of all, the objectives and purposes of the study (false friends in receptive processes) were taken into account in order to formulate the questions and to choose the number of them that should be needed; then, there was a progressive move to the wording and sequencing of those questions (see *section 4.4.1.*, pp. 320 for further information). The order of the questions was carefully thought over in order to achieve a coherent and effective tool and in order to gain the students' interest and collaboration in this project. After formulating the questions and organising the activities (see *section 4.4.2.*, pp. 322-332), it was time to check the efficiency of this tool. Thus, the questionnaire was tested on a small group of subjects.

The questionnaire underwent a process of revision and ***piloting*** with a small sample population (18 PhD students at the USC) to see if it really worked and if the information that I could retrieve from the questionnaire was useful for the previously established purposes. Once the piloting was completed, I revised the questionnaire, introduced some changes and moved to the final draft, its printing and distribution.

The final draft of the questionnaire consists of two different parts, each of them having clearly distinct aims. Part I gets the participants involved in different activities where they show their knowledge and understanding of false friends while Part II asks the informants to reflect explicitly on the term false friends, their importance and the techniques and methods used for the teaching and learning of these words in an EFL environment.



After the piloting, it was necessary to think about the students' *recruitment* and the questionnaire *administration*. I decided to hand out the questionnaire in person in a face-to-face situation since this would allow me to be in control of the data collection process, to experience the learners' difficulties with the questionnaire and to urge students to express their feelings about *false friends*. On the rare occasions when I was not present in the classroom, I kindly asked the teachers in charge to register any question, doubt or verbal thought students could verbalise during the completion of this questionnaire. The way students were recruited, the final number of participants and teachers collaborating are described below

❖ Students' Recruitment

Regarding the sample size, initially, the aim was to obtain from 200 to 300 participants per institution; this could be considered as a representative sample size which could allow us to derive conclusions that would apply to the target population in this study. In March 2011, I started to contact some teachers from the aforementioned institutions. The questionnaire was sent to over 40 teachers in Galicia in the months of March and April. Good contacts with teachers from these institutions were of vital importance (the help of my supervisor was essential in order to get in touch with some of these teachers). I first emailed them to explain the aim and purpose of this survey and encouraged them to participate in this experience. Some of them showed their willingness to take part in this project. The teachers' response was most of the times positive, although some of them could not participate in this project due to *time* constraints, the *basic* level of the students or because of they had a *sick* leave at the moment (only 1 person). I wrote a total number of 41 emails addressed to different teachers in different locations: highschoools, schools of languages and universities. In the end, 30 teachers collaborated in this project. The teachers were recruited in three different ways: some of them were directly contacted via email (18), others (6) were contacted through some of my friends (those friends of mine having a teacher in their families, or knowing a teacher through the school they studied in) and some other teachers (6) joined the research because they heard it from their colleagues in the department. This means that apart from convenience sampling, I used snowball samplings and random sampling (Dörney, 2003:72). Thus, I contacted easily accessible schools (convenience sampling) and I asked the contacts in these schools to think about other colleagues who could be willing to participate in the research (snowball sampling). In this sense, as I was not searching for a particular highshchool or for a

particular geographical area, it was random sampling. In fact, although the questionnaires distributed in an urban area are more abundant (Santiago, Pontevedra) and this ensures a wider national character (subjects from other parts of Spain live there), there is a group of respondents from a more rural context (Cee), which guarantees a wider spectrum of settings and a slightly different type of learners. In any case, the questionnaires have been all distributed in the Autonomous Community of Galicia.

Concerning the number of teachers who participated in this study (Table 41), they finally amount to 30 teachers, 14 highschool teachers, 8 teachers at different language centres, and 8 university lecturers.

<b>ACADEMIC YEAR: 2010/2011 and 2011/2012</b>	
<b>Type of Institution</b>	<b>N. of Teachers</b>
<b>Highschools</b>	14
<b>Language Centres</b>	8
<b>University (Philology &amp; Chemical Engineering)</b>	8
<b>Total</b>	30

**TABLE 41:** Number of Teachers-Participants per Institution

The collaboration of these teachers was essential in the students' recruitment process. They encouraged their students to take part in this research; and thanks to them, 1,100 questionnaires were collected. After the collection process, there was a selection process consisting in checking the questionnaires and observing if they complied with the requirements of the research project. A total of seventy-three questionnaires were discarded for two main reasons: 1) the participants' *mother tongue* (some of the participants in this questionnaire had Polish, English, German, Russian or Chinese as their mother tongues; however, these subject do not stick to the focus of this study which is on Spanish learners of English) or 2) lack of data (i.e. automatised and careless completion of the questionnaire which was specially detected in some questionnaires collected at high school level). A final count of 1,027 questionnaires was finally obtained, the participants are all Spanish speakers who are learning English as a foreign language in a Galician academic setting (Spain). The distribution of teachers and the number of participants per institution are presented in Table 42 (next page).

ACADEMIC YEARS: 2010/2011 and 2011/2012		
Place of Collection	Number of Teachers	Number of participants
Highschools	14	320
Language Centres	8	342
University (Philology & Chemical Engineering)	8	365
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>1027</b>

**TABLE 42:** Number of Teachers and Students per Institution

## ❖ Questionnaire Administration

The questionnaires were paper-based and distributed mainly during class time in order to control the conditions, to avoid questionnaire losses and secure completion. This allowed for face-to-face interaction between the researcher and the respondents. The researcher was most of the times present during the process; this enabled me to register the students' reactions, their opinions and views on the topic and on the questions proposed. After contacting via email with a number of teachers in different highschools, private teaching institutions and university teachers at the USC, I personally went to the different highschools, institutions and faculties to administer the questionnaire.

The administration was made *by hand* mostly by either the researcher (myself) or the teacher who was present during the completion of the questionnaire. It was a group administration; teachers' cooperation was important in this respect since there were times in which the students were divided into smaller groups to ensure oral practice of the English language and arrangements in larger groups were made by different teachers in order to gather students together for the administration of this questionnaire.

From the very beginning, the teachers were informed about the study, the questionnaire and about the main requirements to carry out the administration of the questionnaire. At the moment of the administration, some teachers remained in the classroom, others left me alone with the students. Most teachers decided to leave the researcher with the participants. In the case of the latter, I introduced myself to the participants and tried to create a nice and positive atmosphere in order to avoid anxiety and fear while completing the questionnaire. I explained that I was doing some research on English vocabulary without mentioning false friends and I advise students to take the activities as simple word games in order to keep them motivated. I also encouraged

them to ask me any questions regarding the activities or speak up their hesitations and doubts. There were two important conditions: students should complete the questionnaires *individually* and they could not look up any English dictionaries or electronic devices (smartphones and the like) at the moment of the completion. In case learners manifested the impossibility to respond to some of the questions despite their efforts and their use of inferencing skills, learners were told to leave the answers blank in order to avoid the effect of random answers on the final results. The questionnaires were collected at two different moments: at the end of the academic year 2010-2011, that is, June 2011, and at the beginning of the academic year 2011-2012, that is, October 2012. The data collected in the first period were not sufficient since there was an unbalance in the amount of questionnaires collected in the three different institutions. Over 700 questionnaires were assembled in this first period; however, most participants were studying English at different highschools and at the language centre. The final figures made it necessary the gathering of more data at the university level so as to obtain a number of around 300 respondents per institution. The final aim was to be able to involve around 900 participants which would correspond to 300 questionnaires per each of the different educational institution represented in this survey. In the end and thanks to the help of 14 highschool teachers, 8 teachers in the language centre (centre for Modern Language Centre at the USC) and 8 in the Faculty of Philology, the questionnaires finally amounted to 1027 (see Table 42).

Once I had all the data from the respondents, I transformed the responses into numeric variables, that is, I coded the replies and entered them in a PASW spreadsheet for their analysis.

#### 4.5.3. Stage III: Entering Data in a PASW Spreadsheet

After the administration and collection process, the replies were entered in a **PASW** Statistics 18 spreadsheet for a basic statistical analysis of frequencies and percentages. PASW is the short form for *Predictive Analytics Software*. It is a program for data analysis which allows users to perform different statistical tests<sup>79</sup> from very basic descriptive statistics (frequencies, central tendencies) to inferential or multivariate

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<sup>79</sup> The information here is based on an online pdf document which explains how to use and run an earlier version of this software: *PASW Statistics 17 (SPSS 17)*. The file was prepared in 2010 in the California State University. Retrieved from: <<http://www.calstatela.edu/its/docs/pdf/pasw17p1.pdf>> Accessed on 12/05/2012

analysis (ANOVA). This software is particularly useful for the analysis of questionnaires.

Broadly speaking, the use of PASW in this study was restricted to a frequency analysis. The working procedure was to enter the data obtained from the 1027 questionnaires manually in order to register the learners' responses. This allowed me to perform a basic analysis of frequencies. Each question was converted into a different variable (mainly nominal and ordinal), and all the possible answers to the questions turned into numbers so that the PASW software could work and process the data correctly. After entering all these data in a PASW spreadsheet, I examined the output data in order to draw some conclusions on the learners' interpretation and understanding of the 40 English false friends.

#### *4.5.4. Stage IV: Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analysis*

After defining the variables and manually entering the participants' responses in a PASW data file, the frequency analysis was carried out. The PASW output window for the descriptive analysis of frequencies provides tables with *frequencies* for each variable and its corresponding *percentages* (divided into valid percentages and cumulative percentages). The results obtained were then scrutinised by applying two different types of analysis: quantitative and qualitative. A mixed research methodology was applied in order to have a comprehensive analysis of the learners' replies and their understanding of false friends. The statistical results (frequency analysis) were complemented with a qualitative approach to the results. Thus the answers and the options chosen by the learners were carefully analysed in order to gain a full understanding of how Spanish students interpret English false friends when they come across them in receptive tasks.

### **4.6. Data Analysis**

This section aims at giving a general overview of the main findings drawn from the analysis of the questionnaire. It is divided into two subsections. The first subsection offers a descriptive analysis of the frequencies gathered from PASW Statistics 18 while the second one seeks to understand and give an explanation to the problems posed by the phenomenon of false friends (see the discussion *section 4.7.*, pp.391 for a more in-depth analysis of the findings).

#### 4.6.1. Quantitative Analysis


As aforementioned, this first subsection presents the results of the frequency analysis. The frequency tables included in the present discussion display all the information and numerical data relevant to the analysis of the whole set of activities in the questionnaire and to each of the FF examined. They show the frequencies with which learners choose the different options in the questionnaire, the missing values obtained and the corresponding percentages (valid and cumulative percentages). After giving a general summary of the results in each of the tasks, each FF will be individually examined.

As regards the first task of the questionnaire (Part I), results in the **word recognition task** suggest that the students' mental concepts of some false friends (see, for instance, *crime*, *inhabited* or *collar*) do not adjust to the real English sense. The participants' replies clearly show that learners tend to attribute the Spanish referents to English *crime*, *inhabited* and *collar*. In fact, these words are associated with the images of "a murder," "an uninhabited house" and "a woman's necklace." In spite of this, learners appear to be acquainted with other high-frequency words which are false friends with Spanish items. Thus, the English adjective *embarrassed* and the noun *rope* tend to be matched up with their corresponding pictures in Task 1. Learners tend to connect both words with the correct pictures. Table 43 presents all the frequencies and percentages for the eight false friends examined in Task 1 (*collar*, *conductor*, *crime*, *embarrassed*, *inhabited*, *lecture*, *quiet*, and *rope*).

ACTIVITY 1	FREQUENCY	✖	✓	% of Inaccuracy	% of Accuracy
<b>COLLAR</b>	1012	348	664	34,4	65,6
<b>CONDUCTOR</b>	1007	179	828	17,8	82,2
<b>CRIME</b>	1015	999	16	98,4	1,6
<b>EMBARRASSED</b>	1026	28	998	2,7	97,3
<b>INHABITED</b>	1004	654	350	65,1	34,9
<b>LECTURE</b>	1015	313	702	30,8	69,2
<b>QUIET</b>	1025	113	912	11	89
<b>ROPE</b>	1019	108	911	10,6	89,4
<b>TOTAL</b>	8123	2742	5381	33,8	66,2


**TABLE 43:** Accuracy and Inaccuracy in the Word Recognition Task

As for the individual analysis of the noun *camera*, which is the *distractor* of this activity, less than one percent of the respondents choose the wrong picture, that of a "calculator." The students' lack of attention might explain their wrong choice.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Calculator	7	,7	,7	,7
	<b>Camera</b>	<b>1017</b>	<b>99,0</b>	<b>99,3</b>	100,0
	Total	1024	99,7	100,0	
Missing		3	,3		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 44:** Results of the Frequency Analysis for CAMERA


The word *collar* appears to bring about confusion among participants since 34.3 per cent of the respondents tick the picture of the necklace, instead of the picture of the T-shirt *collar* which would be the right option. Nevertheless, over half of the participants (65.6 per cent) select the correct image for this word; and one person decided to tick both pictures (the necklace and the T-shirt *collar*). As regards the number of subjects who left this word blank, the missing values in Table 45 show that fifteen of the participants ticked none of the pictures. It is very likely that these students who did not give an answer to this item ignored the meaning of this noun. The frequencies and percentages of wrong and right answers provided by students are specified in the chart below.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<b>Collar</b>	<b>664</b>	<b>64,7</b>	<b>65,6</b>	65,6
	Necklace	347	33,8	34,3	99,9
	Both	1	,1	,1	100,0
	Total	1012	98,5	100,0	
Missing		15	1,5		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 45:** Results of the Frequency Analysis for COLLAR



The noun *conductor* seems to be overlooked by some respondents. Twenty subjects, who amount to around 2 percent of the total, prefer not to tick any of the pictures provided. Regardless of these subjects, almost 18 percent of the participants say that a *conductor* is a driver; 82 percent of the students know that a *conductor* directs an orchestra and one of the respondents believes that a *conductor* can be both a driver and

an orchestra manager. Although an overriding majority chooses the right option, there are 178 learners who interpret this word in the Spanish way, that is, they associate it with the image of a driver.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Driver	178	17,3	17,7	17,7
	<b>Conductor</b>	<b>828</b>	<b>80,6</b>	<b>82,2</b>	99,9
	Both	1	,1	,1	100,0
	Total	1007	98,1	100,0	
Missing		20	1,9		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 46 : Results of the Frequency Analysis for CONDUCTOR**


The noun *crime* is a quite comprehensive term in English which refers to any type of illegal action. Testees are offered two images (one of a murder, the other of a robbery): both of them are illustrative examples of what the English noun *crime* means. One of them shows a man stealing money and the other depicts a man stabbing another man. Although there is a timid group of respondents (1.6 per cent of the total) who ticked both images, learners show a clear preference for the picture which shows the murder (69 per cent) while the remaining percentage of participants (28.2 per cent) go for the picture which shows a robbery. The fact that students prefer the second drawing (that of a murder) indicates that participants are possibly guided by their mother tongue (Spanish) in their choices. Strictly speaking, less than 2 per cent of the participants answered the question right and ticked both images.

 		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Robbery	290	28,2	28,6	28,6
	Murder	709	69,0	69,9	98,4
	<b>Both</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>1,6</b>	<b>1,6</b>	100,0
	Total	1015	98,8	100,0	
Missing		12	1,2		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 47 : Results of the Frequency Analysis for CRIME**




The adjective *embarrassed* is a traditional example of false friend between Spanish and English. However, this adjective does not seem to be so problematic as other false friends. In fact, learners commonly associate this English adjective with the emotional state of being ashamed as represented by the picture of the monkey. The idea of being pregnant is chosen by only 2.7 percent of the participants, a percentage that is really irrelevant; finally, only one person believes that *embarrassed* could mean both discomfited and pregnant. The early introduction of this word in EFL, together with its frequency of occurrence in English, may have a bearing on the small number of errors attested in the data.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<b>Embarrassed</b>	<b>998</b>	<b>97,2</b>	<b>97,3</b>	97,3
	Pregnant	27	2,6	2,6	99,9
	Both	1	,1	,1	100,0
	Total	1026	99,9	100,0	
Missing		1	,1		
Total		1027	100,0		


**TABLE 48:** Results of the Frequency Analysis for EMBARRASSED

As regards the word *inhabited*, this participial adjective is not transparent for those studying English due to the presence of the *in*-like negative prefix which is not a real prefix, but a part of the base of the verb *inhabit*, which means “having inhabitants,” “being populated.” Some 2.2 per cent of the participants decided not to take a risk and did not tick any of the options offered. Over 65 per cent of those who replied chose the remains of a ruined house which would correspond to the adjective *uninhabited* and almost 35 per cent opted for the right option.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Uninhabited	654	63,7	65,1	65,1
	<b>Inhabited</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>34,1</b>	<b>34,9</b>	100,0
	Total	1004	97,8	100,0	
Missing		23	2,2		
Total		1027	100,0		


**TABLE 49:** Results of the Frequency Analysis for INHABITED

Similar percentages to those of *inhabited* are obtained for the noun *lecture* but in a reverse manner; thus, the highest percentage goes for the right option. Over 69 per cent of the respondents claimed that the picture that best fits this noun is the one in which a man is delivering a speech before an audience. The image of the child reading a book was selected by almost 31 per cent of the subjects; this means that 311 participants assume that *lecture* refers to the act of reading rather than to the act of delivering speeches. Two students marked the two images.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Reading	311	30,3	30,6	30,6
	<b>Lecture</b>	<b>702</b>	<b>68,4</b>	<b>69,2</b>	99,8
	Both	2	,2	,2	100,0
	Total	1015	98,8	100,0	
Missing		12	1,2		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 50:** Results of the Frequency Analysis for LECTURE


Participants often associate the noun *rope* with the suitable image. Only 10.6 per cent of the 1,019 participants, who ticked an option, selected the picture of the hanging clothes. Only 8 of the subjects did not show their understanding of this word since they did not associate this word with any of the pictures provided.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<b>Rope</b>	<b>911</b>	<b>88,7</b>	<b>89,4</b>	89,4
	Clothing	108	10,5	10,6	100,0
	Total	1019	99,2	100,0	
Missing		8	,8		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 51:** Results of the Frequency Analysis for ROPE

The adjective *quiet* is not as easy for students as might be thought at first glance. In fact, learners appear to hesitate about the real sense of this high-frequency term. In fact, when students are confronted with a picture where a group of people are motionless, doubts arise. Almost 11 per cent of the respondents chose the group of

people who were standing still (which would be the option more clearly associated with the Spanish word *quieto* “still”); and two subjects went for both options. Students who selected the two options given might be correct (the second picture might be interpreted as a group of people who are making no noise); at least, they are more accurate than those who only go for the second picture because the English term *quiet* is essentially connected with the idea of being silent. Anyway, this adjective is not totally unknown to the participants. As a matter of fact, *quiet*, together with the noun *rope*, obtain similar figures; almost 90 per cent of the total sample population assign the correct picture to these words.

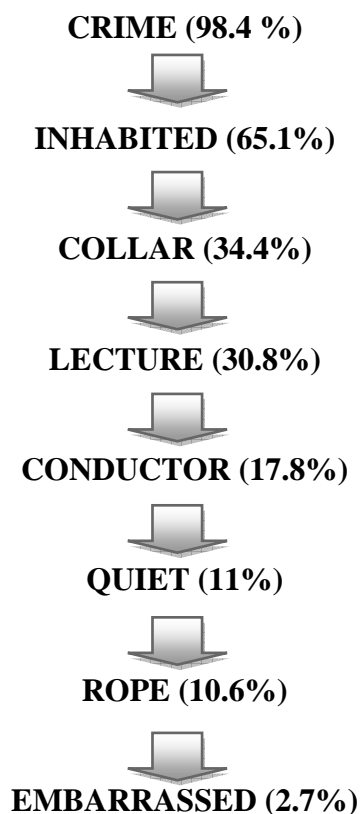


		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<b>Quiet</b>	<b>912</b>	<b>88,8</b>	<b>89,0</b>	89,0
	Still	111	10,8	10,8	99,8
	Both	2	,2	,2	100,0
	Total	1025	99,8	100,0	
Missing		2	,2		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 52:** Results of the Frequency Analysis for QUIET

According to the results obtained in the word recognition task, the noun *crime* is almost exclusively connected with the notion of murder (98.4 per cent); only 1.6 per cent of the subjects know that *crime* can refer to a robbery or a murder. Participants who choose one option or the other are not totally right; they are not acquainted with the broad nature of the English term. Therefore, this word is situated up in the scale of difficult-to-interpret words. The adjective *inhabited* is also quite challenging for learners. The deceptive transparency of this word and the presence of the *in*-like prefix may have led 65.1 per cent of the participants to misinterpret it. Next come the nouns *collar*, *lecture* and *conductor*. Between 34.7 per cent and 17.7 per cent of the learners do not interpret these three items correctly. It is not possible to determine whether the specificity of these words has contributed to an increase in the number of misinterpretations. These three nouns are highly constrained to particular walks of life: *collar* is specific to the textile world, *lecture* occurs in the academic context and *conductor* is connected to the world of transport. By contrast, the words *quiet*, *rope* and *embarrassed* which are more

general in their nature are the least problematic ones. Figure 34 shows the false friends ranked in order of difficulty, going from the most problematic word, *crime* with over 98 per cent of wrong answers, to the adjective *embarrassed* which displays the least number of errors (less than 3 per cent of errors).



**FIGURE 34:** Arrangement of FF according to their Degree of Difficulty in Task 1


In sum, this first task of the questionnaire intends to look into the students' understanding of eight false friends with a view to identifying the participants' misconceptions of these words and the influence of their L1 on the interpretation of these lexical items. The learners' responses helped us have some intuitions about the organisation of their mental lexicons and the possible interactions between languages.

The **second task** of the questionnaire contains five words with five different definitions. The words *assist*, *casualty*, *college*, *mayor* and *firm* are under analysis here. This activity delves into the students' semantic knowledge of these words. In this activity, students say whether the definitions provided are correct or not. This activity shows whether learners are familiar with some specific false friends and whether they get confused with the Spanish counterpart which typically has a different meaning. Table 53 discloses the results obtained in this second activity and shows that learners tend to misunderstand the noun *casualty* and the verb *assist*.

ACTIVITY 2	FREQUENCY	✖	✓	% of Inaccuracy	% of Accuracy
ASSIST	1010	618	392	61,2	38,8
CASUALTY	976	654	322	67	33
COLLEGE	1015	278	737	27,4	72,6
FIRM	1004	252	752	25,1	74,9
MAYOR	1019	88	931	8,6	91,4
TOTAL	5024	1890	3134	37,6	62,4


**TABLE 53:** Accuracy and Inaccuracy in the Definition-Matching Task

Regarding the verb *assist*, 61.2 per cent of the respondents replied that *assist* has the meaning of “to be present at.” This shows that most participants have the orthographically similar verb in Spanish *asistir* in mind when they accept the definition provided as being accurate. In fact, the Spanish verb makes reference to the fact of going to or being at a particular place. The remaining 38.8 per cent do not agree with the definition offered; thus, these participants are supposed to interpret it in the English way. Seventeen subjects refrained from answering this question (it is likely that these participants do not feel confident about their understanding of this word).

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Wrong Definition	618	60,2	61,2	61,2
	<b>Well-done</b>	<b>392</b>	<b>38,2</b>	<b>38,8</b>	100,0
	Total	1010	98,3	100,0	
Missing		17	1,7		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 54:** Results of the Frequency Analysis for ASSIST


As regards the noun *casualty*, students seem to ignore the real sense of this English noun. In a similar vein, they do not seem to be acquainted with the English phrase *road casualties*. In fact, most of the participants crossed out the definition given “injured or killed in an accident,” which is precisely the correct definition of this noun. Thirty-three percent of those who answered this question considered it right, while 67 percent of them said that the definition provided is wrong. Therefore, only 33 per cent of the participants actually know the real meaning of *casualty*. The high percentage of missing replies is also significant, 5 per cent of the participants in this study do not provide an answer to this question.



		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<b>Well-done</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>31,4</b>	<b>33,0</b>	33,0
	Wrong Option	654	63,7	67,0	100,0
	Total	976	95,0	100,0	
Missing		51	5,0		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 55:** Results of the Frequency Analysis for CASUALTY


As for the noun *college*, most respondents (72.6 per cent) choose the correct option and say that a *college* is not a public school of primary education; 27.4 per cent of the participants ticked the incorrect definition thus connecting it with a lower level of education (probably due to the learners' association with Spanish *colegio* "school" or due to a shallow or surface reading of the definition).



		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Wrong Option	278	27,1	27,4	27,4
	<b>Well-done</b>	<b>737</b>	<b>71,8</b>	<b>72,6</b>	100,0
	Total	1015	98,8	100,0	
Missing		12	1,2		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 56:** Results of the Frequency Analysis for COLLEGE


*Mayor* is correctly defined in this task and 91.4 per cent of the participants think so; only 8.6 per cent of the subjects completing this question did not get it right. Therefore, no outstanding difficulties have been found in the interpretation of this word.



		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<b>Well-done</b>	<b>931</b>	<b>90,7</b>	<b>91,4</b>	91,4
	Wrong Option	88	8,6	8,6	100,0
	Total	1019	99,2	100,0	
Missing		8	,8		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 57:** Results of the Frequency Analysis for MAYOR

Seven hundred and fifty-two out of the 1,004 subjects who answered this question know that *firm* cannot be used as a synonym of signature, *firma* in Spanish. Thus almost 75 per cent of the respondents are supposed to know what this noun refers to in English. The remaining 25 percent consider that *firm* denotes a signature. This might indicate that some learners may produce sentences such as: *Sir, I need your firm on this document* when they mean signature and not *firm*. This finding suggests that teachers should give some feedback on the correct use of this word in order to avoid problems and misunderstandings in their use of English

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Wrong Option	252	24,5	25,1	25,1
	<b>Well-done</b>	<b>752</b>	<b>73,2</b>	<b>74,9</b>	100,0
	Total	1004	97,8	100,0	
Missing		23	2,2		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 58:** Results of the Frequency Analysis for FIRM

On the whole, the results obtained in this second task of the questionnaire show that the noun *casualty* and the verb *assist* are confusing and misleading for most learners. Over 60 per cent of the participants do not seem to know the meaning of these two lexical items. It is curious to see that the verb *assist* poses many difficulties in both reception and production. In addition to this, two other high-frequency English nouns such as *college* and *firm* (W2, S1 and W1, S1, respectively) are assigned the wrong meaning. The percentage of error per item is illustrated below.

**CASUALTY (63.7 %)**



**ASSIST (61.2%)**



**COLLEGE (27.4%)**



**FIRM (25.1%)**



**MAYOR (8.6%)**

**FIGURE 35:** Arrangement of FF according to their Degree of Difficulty in Task 2

To sum up, this word identification task aims at finding out about the students' understanding of some high-frequency false friends in different fields. The definitions provided do not intend to confuse learners but to look into their perception and understanding of these terms in isolation. As a way of conclusion and according to the data obtained, learners do not have the meanings of words such as *assist* and *casualty* clear; they have difficulties with the real senses of these words and seem to assign the meaning of their Spanish homographs to them. The words *college* and *firm* are also misinterpreted to a lesser extent. By contrast, respondents seem to be acquainted with the core meaning of the English noun *mayor*.

In activity 3, learners are asked about the accuracy of some **word collocates** which contain false friends as headwords. The learners' answers to this task reflect the students' semantic and syntactic knowledge of these lexical items and their command of the English language. A general overview of the results in this activity shows that most learners ignore the meaning and collocations of words such as *commodities* and *blank*.


ACTIVITY 3	FREQUENCY	✖	✔	% of Inaccuracy	% of Accuracy
ACCOMMODATE	969	360	609	37,2	62,8
APPOINT	978	145	833	14,8	85,2
BLANK	962	591	371	61,4	38,6
CAMP	989	152	837	15,4	84,6
COMMODITY	971	633	338	65,2	34,8
FINE	964	469	495	48,7	51,3
LOCALS	971	532	439	54,8	45,2
NOTICE	1001	479	522	47,9	52,1
PIPE	943	298	645	31,6	68,4
REALISE	997	324	673	32,5	67,5
TOTAL	9745	3983	5762	40,9	59,1

**TABLE 59:** Accuracy and Inaccuracy in the Word-Collocations Task

In any case, the individual results for each of these lexical items are discussed in the succeeding paragraphs.

The first verb phrase to analyse is the collocation *to accommodate a friend* which means “to oblige a friend (complacer), to do a favour to.” Most participants consider it incorrect. Over 60 percent of the respondents claimed that this phrase is not totally accurate in English while 37 per cent of them assert that it is right. It is remarkable that over 5 percent of the subjects answering the questionnaire avoid saying whether this phrase is correct or not. These missing values obtained may respond to the learners' lack of confidence in the correctness of this phrase.




					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Well-done	360	35,1	37,2	37,2
	Wrong Option	609	59,3	62,8	100,0
	Total	969	94,4	100,0	
Missing		58	5,6		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 60:** Frequency Analysis for ACCOMMODATE

(Collocation=To accommodate a friend)

Once again over 5 percent of the respondents did not take the risk of judging whether the utterance *bread and meat are basic commodities* is correct or not. A total of 65.2 per cent of those who gave a reply did it in the wrong way. Over half of the participants believe that this utterance is incorrect; by contrast, almost 35 percent of the participants consider it right. Therefore, this word in this sentence sounds wrong to most participants in the survey. This may indicate that Spanish learners ignore the real meaning and use of this English noun (except for over one third of the participants who made the right choice).


					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Well-done	338	32,9	34,8	34,8
	Wrong Option	633	61,6	65,2	100,0
	Total	971	94,5	100,0	
Missing		56	5,5		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 61:** Frequency Analysis for COMMODITIES

(Utterance= Bread &amp; meat are basic commodities)


Learners mostly select the wrong option when they are asked about the use of the adjective *blank* in the noun phrase *a blank expression on your face*. They do not appear to know this use of *blank*. In fact, a total of 61.4 per cent of the participants contend that one cannot say that *someone has a blank expression on his/her face* which, on the other

hand, is perfectly acceptable in English.<sup>80</sup> The learners' decision could have been influenced by their limited knowledge of this word and their frequency of use in other contexts (e.g. *blank verse*, *fill in the blanks exercise*, etc). In contrast to this, over one third of the participants (38.6 per cent) choose to mark this phrase as correct.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<b>Well-done</b>	<b>371</b>	<b>36,1</b>	<b>38,6</b>	38,6
	Wrong Option	591	57,5	61,4	100,0
	Total	962	93,7	100,0	
Missing		65	6,3		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 62:** Frequency Analysis for BLANK  
(Collocation= A blank expression on your face)


These data are somewhat reversed when considering the results obtained for the noun *camp*. Students know the syntagmatic properties of this noun, and accept the phrase *summer camp* as a valid collocation. A total of 84.6 per cent of the respondents claim that it is correct and only 15.4 per cent think that *summer camp* is not totally accurate. The knowledge of this word might be connected to the students' familiarity and participation in English summer camps which are quite popular in Spain.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<b>Well-done</b>	<b>837</b>	<b>81,5</b>	<b>84,6</b>	84,6
	Wrong Option	152	14,8	15,4	100,0
	Total	989	96,3	100,0	
Missing		38	3,7		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 63:** Frequency Analysis for CAMP  
(Collocation= Summer camp)

<sup>80</sup> The *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* in its second sense makes reference to the use of *blank* in combination with nouns, such as face, look, expression or eyes. In this context, *blank* means showing no emotion, understanding, or interest. This is an electronic resource operated by Pearson Education Limited. Retrieved from: <[http://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/blank\\_1](http://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/blank_1)> Accessed on 11/12/2011.


The noun phrase *water pipe* is correct in English as is *pipe water* (water from the pipe) and, in fact, 68.4 per cent of the students know that it is correct; however, 31.6 per cent of them consider it odd or inaccurate. It is remarkable that the amount of missing values is higher here than anywhere else in activity 3. Thus, a total of 84 students (8.2 per cent of the participants) do not provide an answer to this question. This might indicate that some students have not seen this English word before or have not incorporated it to their L2 lexical stocks.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<b>Well-done</b>	<b>645</b>	<b>62,8</b>	<b>68,4</b>	68,4
	Wrong Option	298	29,0	31,6	100,0
	Total	943	91,8	100,0	
Missing		84	8,2		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 64:** Frequency Analysis for PIPE

(Collocation= Water Pipe)


Concerning the adjective *fine*, the percentages for the correct and incorrect answers are quite balanced. Over 48 per cent of respondents seem to have a good command of the “wine culture” since they do not fail when saying that a *wine* can be said to be *fine* (e.g. *the fine wine company*; *the world of fine wine*). By contrast, about 47 per cent of the participants would not use this collocation in English as they consider it unacceptable.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<b>Well-done</b>	<b>495</b>	<b>48,2</b>	<b>51,3</b>	51,3
	Wrong Option	469	45,7	48,7	100,0
	Total	964	93,9	100,0	
Missing		63	6,1		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 65:** Frequency Analysis for FINE

(Collocation= Fine Wine)


As regards the use of the English verb *appoint*, most participants answer that this verb cannot be used in the collocation *appoint with a gun*. Only 14 per cent of the respondents have some doubts about the correctness of this collocation and mark it as correct. These findings show that learners know how to use this verb, or at least, they reveal that students know that this phrase is a calque from Spanish. Therefore, the Spanish verb *apuntar* does not have an impact on the learners' grammaticality judgements in this particular case.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Wrong Option	145	14,1	14,8	14,8
	<b>Well-done</b>	<b>833</b>	<b>81,1</b>	<b>85,2</b>	100,0
	Total	978	95,2	100,0	
Missing		49	4,8		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 66:** Frequency Analysis for APPOINT

(Collocation= Appoint with a Gun)


The noun *local* in its plural form *locals* seems to be misleading from the participants' point of view. Over 50 of the respondents state that *\*locals to rent* is an accurate collocation. However, it is highly unlikely that this phrase would occur in an English context (it means that one can rent the native inhabitants of a particular place). This denotes that over half of the participants are processing this word through Spanish. In contrast to this, over 40 per cent of the subjects claim that this noun phrase is not correct in English. It has also been observed that 5.5 per cent of the participants leave this unanswered. So the number of missing answers is quite high too.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Wrong Option	532	51,8	54,8	54,8
	<b>Well-done</b>	<b>439</b>	<b>42,7</b>	<b>45,2</b>	100,0
	Total	971	94,5	100,0	
Missing		56	5,5		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 67:** Frequency Analysis for LOCALS

(Collocation= Locals to Rent)


The verb **realise** is presented in the verb phrase **realise an investigation** in task 3. The learners' responses reveal that participants are aware of the false friend here and the data show that over 65 per cent of the learners would not consider this expression as correct. However, over 30 per cent of the participants do not regard it as totally incorrect. This means that they might use it this way at some point.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Wrong Option	324	31,5	32,5	32,5
	<b>Well-done</b>	<b>673</b>	<b>65,5</b>	<b>67,5</b>	100,0
	Total	997	97,1	100,0	
Missing		30	2,9		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 68:** Frequency Analysis for REALISE

(Collocation= Realise an investigation)

The results concerning the noun **notice** are evenly distributed. If we look at the valid percentages from PASW (Table 69), about 48 per cent of the respondents claim that it is perfectly correct to say this while 52 per cent of the participants maintain that *give someone a good notice* does not sound natural in English. The data from both studies tell us that this noun is challenging both in reception and in production although it is in the latter case where this noun produces more problems.

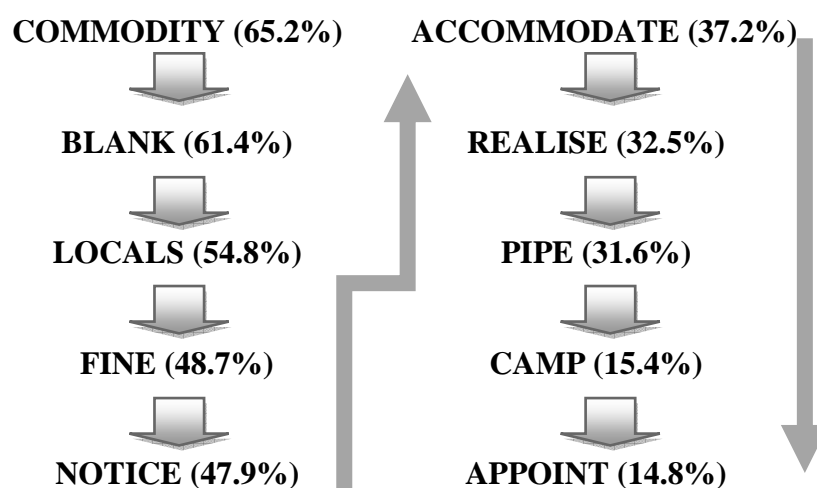
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Wrong Option	479	46,6	47,9	47,9
	<b>Well-done</b>	<b>522</b>	<b>50,8</b>	<b>52,1</b>	100,0
	Total	1001	97,5	100,0	
Missing		26	2,5		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 69:** Frequency Analysis for NOTICE

(Collocation= Give somebody a notice)

To sum up, the results obtained in this third task reveal the students' sensitivity towards the suitability of the collocations of some English false friends. According to the data

obtained, we can uphold that learners do not have good intuitions about the lexical contexts and companions of words such as *commodities*, *accommodate*, *blank* or *locals*. Most students think that *bread* and *meat* cannot be said to be basic *commodities*, that you cannot *accommodate* a friend and that it is impossible to have a *blank expression* on your face; however, they are right when they say that it is possible to go on a *summer camp*, use a *water pipe* and buy some *fine wine*. The distractors included in this task were effective and learners fell into the trap of admitting that some collocations such as *\*locals to rent*, *\*realise an investigation* or *\*give someone a good notice* are correct when they are real calques from Spanish. By contrast, participants are aware that the phrase *\*appoint with a gun* is not correct in English. The following figure illustrates the proportion of incorrect decisions made by the participants arranged in a top-down scale, ranging from the most problematic false friend to the simplest one (*commodity* and *appoint*, respectively):



**FIGURE 36:** Arrangement of FF according to their Degree of Difficulty in Task 3


Task 4 presents four pairs of possible misleading words: *casual vs. eventual*; *career vs. degree*; *sensitive vs. sensible*; *success vs. exit*. In this activity students are asked to **choose the lexical item that best suits the context given**. A wrong choice in each of the sentences reveals that students ignore the meanings of the two words provided, that is, the fact that participants choose *sensible* as the correct option in the first case would imply that they may ignore the meaning of *sensitive*. Table 70 (next page) illustrates the percentage of correct and incorrect answers. As can be gathered from the data in this table, learners are especially doubtful when facing the pair *casual/ eventual* which occurs in the following sentence: *It is expensive to hire casual/ eventual*

*workers* (see Appendix 1, pp. 459). In fact, most participants opt for the wrong adjective, that is, *eventual*. After this pair of words, choosing between *career* and *degree* appears to be the most complex decision for students to make. The remaining pairs of false friends (*sensitive/sensible* and *success/exit*) produce less problems.

ACTIVITY 4	FREQUENCY	✖	✓	% of Inaccuracy	% of Accuracy
CAREER	966	239	727	24,7	75,3
CASUAL	985	764	221	77,6	22,4
EVENTUAL(ly)	985	764	221	77,6	22,4
EXIT	1012	54	958	5,3	94,7
SENSIBLE	1014	193	821	19	81
SUCCESS	1012	54	958	5,3	94,7
TOTAL	5974	2068	3906	34,6	65,4

**TABLE 70:** Errors and correct choices in the Gap Filling Task


Concerning the sentence of the *sensitive grandma*, the valid percent indicates that 81 per cent of the participants know that the adjective *sensitive* must be applied to a person who is easily upset by other people's comments. Still, 19 per cent of the participants choose the wrong adjective, that is, *sensible*. This confusion is undoubtedly brought about by the existence of an homograph in the participants' mother tongue (e.g. Spanish *sensible*) which precisely means "sensitive."

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Well-done	821	79,9	81,0	81,0
	Wrong Option	193	18,8	19,0	100,0
	Total	1014	98,7	100,0	
Missing		13	1,3		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 71:** Results for the distinction between SENSITIVE/ SENSIBLE

Students find more difficult to make a distinction between *career* and *degree*. Although over 75 percent of the participants opted for *degree*, 24.7 percent of them selected *career*. This is a quite serious mistake if we take into account that having a *university career* is not the same as studying a *university degree*. It is necessary to take into account that someone who is doing a university course or university degree is different from someone who is a teacher at university or who wants to work at university. This distinction is what really matters in this sentence. The context of


occurrence prompts the selection of the English word *degree* in this task (cooccurrence with the verb *study*). However, almost 25 per cent of the participants opted for the noun *career* in the sentence *I do not want to study a university CAREER/DEGREE*.



		Frecuencia	Porcentaje	Porcentaje válido	Porcentaje acumulado
Válidos	Wrong Option	239	24,1	24,7	24,7
	<b>Well-done</b>	<b>727</b>	<b>73,2</b>	<b>75,3</b>	100,0
	Total	966	97,3	100,0	
Perdidos	Sistema	27	2,7		
Total		993	100,0		

**TABLE 72:** Results for the distinction between CAREER/DEGREE

As regards the nouns *success* and *exit*, they are present in the sentence *Her last book was a big SUCCESS/EXIT*, most learners go for the first lexical item and choose the noun *success* as the correct option; in fact, only 5.3 per cent choose the noun *exit* as the most suitable one in this context. This seems to indicate that most participants know the sense and use of these English nouns (or at least, the sense of English *success*).




		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<b>Well-done</b>	<b>958</b>	<b>93,3</b>	<b>94,7</b>	94,7
	Wrong Option	54	5,3	5,3	100,0
	Total	1012	98,5	100,0	
Missing		15	1,5		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 73:** Results for the distinction between SUCCESS/EXIT

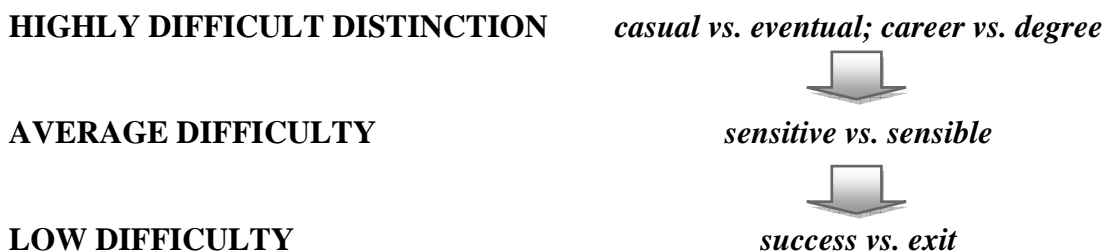
As regards the last sentence in this task, *it is expensive to hire CASUAL/ EVENTUAL workers*, most students make a wrong choice. Participants reveal their preference for *eventual workers* over *casual workers* in their responses. The influence of the L1 may be the factor triggering the learners' choice of *eventual* in this context.



		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<b>Well-done</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>21,5</b>	<b>22,4</b>	22,4
	Wrong Option	764	74,4	77,6	100,0
	Total	985	95,9	100,0	
Missing		42	4,1		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 74:** Results for the distinction between CASUAL/EVENTUAL

According to the results obtained in task 4, the distinction between *casual* and *eventual* is the most difficult one for the respondents in this study (percentage of error: 77.6 per cent); most subjects underline the word *eventual* when they should select *casual*. Following this pair of problematic words, two nouns seem to be not easily distinguished: *career* and *degree* with a percentage of error which reaches up to 24.7 per cent. Finally, there do not seem to be so many doubts about the semantic differences between *sensitive* and *sensible* (percentage of error: 19 per cent) and between *success* and *exit* (percentage of error: 5.3 per cent). In this last case, the rate of right answers amounts to almost 95 per cent of the total. If we want to establish a rating scale of word pairs according to the difficulties observed, the scale would be as follows:

**FIGURE 37:** Arrangement of FF Pairs according to their Degree of Difficulty in Task 4

Apart from looking into the students' interpretation of false friends in isolation and within a limited linguistic co-text (Task 1 to 4 of the questionnaire), this survey proposes a task that presents different types of visual signs containing false friends in activity 5. This activity gets deeper into the students' understanding of false friends in everyday situations. It provides learners with a clear situational context (Halliday and Hasan, 1990) which might aid students in the understanding of unknown false friends. In this way, the effectiveness of the learners' strategy to guess meaning from context will be assessed.

Task 5 uses a series of real English signs which contain false friends in order to check if learners are misled by the occurrence of these words, or if, on the contrary, they rely more on the context of situation for the interpretation of the contents in these notices. The following signs were used:



FIGURE 38: English Signs Studied


According to the feedback received from learners during the distribution of the questionnaire, this activity proved to be the most difficult one for them. It is not clear whether this is the reason why there is a low percentage of participants who translate all these signs (low level of response) and there is a high percentage of mistakes, which is especially obvious in the case of words or phrases, such as *estate agents* or *motorist*. These two false friends seem to be especially difficult in terms of their interpretation as revealed by the participants' answers to this task. By contrast, the noun *diversion* or the adjective *large* seem to be known by learners of English or at least, they are easily inferred from their context of occurrence. Table 74 summarises the main results in this task.

ACTIVITY 5	FREQUENCY	✖	✓	% of Inaccuracy	% of Accuracy
CARPET	723	59	664	8,2	91,8
DIVERSION	644	54	590	8,4	91,6
ESTATE	458	348	110	76	24
LARGE	747	16	731	2,1	97,9
MOTORIST	595	390	205	65,5	34,5
NOTICE	489	105	384	21,5	78,5
PRESERVATIVE	747	90	657	12	88
TOTAL	4403	1062	3341	24,1	75,9

TABLE 74: Accuracy and Inaccuracy in the Tranlations

I will move now on to the explanation of the learners' translations of the signs.

To begin with, as suggested by the students' translations, the meaning of *diversion* can be clearly inferred from its context of occurrence (i.e. *Road closed. Follow diversion*); the presence of key words, such as *road*, and the actual drawing of the *arrow* indicating a different path must have helped participants in the translation of the message on this sign. The word *diversion* is perfectly interpreted as "an alternative path to a road which is closed" by as many as 590 participants. However, there is a low level of participation, 383 subjects leave the question unanswered. This might indicate that 37.3 per cent of the subjects are not sure of what this word means. If we make the addition of the number of identified mistakes and the number of missing answers, we come to the conclusion that 42.6 per cent of the respondents do not know how to interpret this English sign correctly. In any case, I will talk about the findings on the basis of the evidence we have.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<b>Correct understanding</b>	<b>590</b>	<b>57,4</b>	<b>91,6</b>	91,6
	Misintepretation	54	5,3	8,4	100,0
	Total	644	62,7	100,0	
Missing		383	37,3		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 75: Learners' Interpretation of DIVERSION**

It is clear from the participants' translations that the visual aid of the arrow helps learners interpret this first sign correctly. Thus, the translations provided by participants 242 and 86 below clearly show this (they translate *follow diversion* into "siga la flecha" which literally means "follow the arrow"):


- (1) **Carretera cortada. Seguir la flecha (Participant 242, Baccalaureate: 1st year)**
- (2) **Carretera Cortada. Seguir la dirección de la flecha (Participant 86, Baccalaureate: 1st year)**

However, there are some subjects who, guided by their mother tongue, translate this noun into Spanish *diversión* "fun" thus giving way to serious errors.

- (3) **Bournbrook Road cerrada. A cabeza seguir con la diversión (Participant 281, Baccalaureate: 2nd year)**

**(4) Libros quemados. Carretera Cabeza Cerrada. Sigue la flecha de forma divertida (Participant 225, Baccalaureate: 1st year)**

The students' first intuitions also play a role in their interpretation of the English phrase *estate agents*. The subjects' replies indicate that they ignore the meaning of *estate* and the context provided seems to be useless for its correct interpretation. Over half of the participants did not write the translation of this sign and left it blank. However, those who translated it did get it right; most of them interpreted it in the wrong way and say that *estate agents* are government agents. In actual fact, very few of those who answered this question (around 11 percent) know what an *estate agent* does ("they sell houses or land"), 76 per cent of the participants ignore the real meaning of this expression and give many different translations for this sign.


		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<b>Correct Understanding</b>	110	10,7	24,0	24,0
	Misinterpretation	348	33,9	76,0	100,0
	Total	458	44,6	100,0	
Missing		569	55,4		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 76:** Learners' Interpretation of ESTATE AGENTS

The most recurrent translation of this phrase in the participants' answers is *agentes estatales* o *agentes del estado* which would correspond to some kind of government agents such as police officers. However, this is not the only attempt at translating this sign; students give different translation proposals and interpretations as shown below.

- (5) **J Long and Company. Compañía de abogados (Participant 90/92/93, Baccalaureate: 1st year)**, that is, "solicitors" in English.
- (6) **Agentes de la CIA (Participant 281, Baccalaureate: 2nd year)**> "CIA Agent" in English.
- (7) **Detectives (Participant 221, Baccalaureate: 1st year)**> "Detectives" in English.
- (8) **Hacienda (Participant 227, Baccalaureate: 1st year)**> "Treasury" in English.
- (9) **Agentes de estudio (Participant 146, University: 2nd year)**> "Study agents" in English.

The meaning of the noun *preservative* is clearly grasped by most of the students who translate this sign into Spanish as “sin colorantes ni conservantes.” I assume that students should have studied the particular features of this word in advance since 64 per cent of the total participants know what this deceptive word means in English. The missing values obtained for this noun are not as high as in the case of other false friends. Still 27 per cent of the respondents did not dare to translate the label of this product.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<b>Correct Understanding</b>	<b>657</b>	<b>64,0</b>	<b>88,0</b>	88,0
	Misinterpretation	90	8,8	12,0	100,0
	Total	747	72,7	100,0	
Missing		280	27,3		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 77: Learners' Interpretation of PRESERVATIVES**


By contrast, there are some subjects who take the risk of explaining what this informative label means. Some of them are misled by their mother tongue and translate this word into Spanish *preservativo* “condom:”

- (10) **Los preservativos no contienen colorantes artificiales (Participant 87, Baccalaureate: 1st year)**
- (11) **Preservativos de colores no artificiales (Participant 225, Baccalaureate: 1st year)**
- (12) **Sen colores artificiais ou preservativos (Participant 290, Baccalaureate: 1st year)**

These translations are an example of the students' misinterpretation of an innocent message on a package. The real message of this label is to warn people that the food in this container does not have any chemical substances for colouring or for avoiding decay. However, some of the participants (8.2 per cent) alter the meaning of the message and interpret it as a warning telling people that the prophylactic sheath in the package does not contain artificial colouring.


In spite of the high-frequency of the word *carpet* (S3, W3) in English, this noun is interpreted by over 8 per cent of the participants as being a folder and many of those translate the phrase *carpet department* into *papelería*, i.e. “stationery.” Still 91.8 per

cent of those who decided to give it a try and translate the meaning of the notice said that a *carpet* is used to cover the floor. The percentages of responses which are accurate, together with the percentages of the inaccurate responses and the missing values are shown in the second column of Table 78.

					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<b>Correct Understanding</b>	<b>664</b>	<b>64,7</b>	<b>91,8</b>	91,8
	Misinterpretation	59	5,7	8,2	100,0
	Total	723	70,4	100,0	
Missing		304	29,6		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 78:** Learners' Interpretation of CARPET


In this same notice there is another false friend: the adjective *large*. It co-occurs with the noun *discounts*. The presence of this word combination (*large discounts*) and the existence of an equivalent fixed collocation in Spanish (*grandes/enormes descuentos*) helped participants decode this phrase. In fact, only 2.1 per cent of the respondents in this survey translated this adjective in a literal way.

					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<b>Correct Understanding</b>	<b>731</b>	<b>71,2</b>	<b>97,9</b>	97,9
	Misinterpretation	16	1,6	2,1	100,0
	Total	747	72,7	100,0	
Missing		280	27,3		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 79:** Learners' Interpretation of LARGE


As regards the participants' understanding of the word *notice* in the phrase *police notice*. Over half of the participants did not provide a translation of this word. Irrespective of the missing values and taking into account those who translated this word, 78.5 per cent of the participants show a correct understanding of this noun, the remaining 21.5 per cent interpret it as a *piece of news* rather than as a *warning* under the influence of Spanish *noticia* which means "a piece of news." The missing values in this question may be related to the students' lack of knowledge or to the fact that this phrase

is written in a smaller font than the rest of the message and passed unnoticed for learners.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<b>Correct Understanding</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>37,4</b>	<b>78,5</b>	78,5
	Misinterpretation	105	10,2	21,5	100,0
	Total	489	47,6	100,0	
Missing		538	52,4		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 80: Learners' Interpretation of POLICE NOTICE**

The noun *motorists* is on the same sign as the previous phrase *police notice*. According to the results obtained (Table 81 below), this lexical item is misapprehended by 65.5 per cent of the participants; thus, this noun seems to be quite misleading for learners of English. Only 34.5 per cent of the students gave a correct translation for the noun *motorists*. Most the translations provided by the Spanish participants clearly show an influence of the Spanish homograph *motoristas* which means “motorcyclists.”

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<b>Correct Understanding</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>20,0</b>	<b>34,5</b>	34,5
	Misinterpretation	390	38,0	65,5	100,0
	Total	595	57,9	100,0	
Missing		432	42,1		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 81: Learners' Interpretation of MOTORIST**

The occurrence of the noun *car* appears to be an insufficient clue for learners to interpret the noun *motorist* correctly. Learners assume that *motorists* have motorbikes, not cars. For this reason, it is striking to find out about how Spanish students resort to the superordinate term of *car* which is *vehicle* (includes motorbikes, cars, buses, trucks, etc) in order to get rid of the problem posed by the superficial inconsistency of the co-occurrence of words such as *motorists* and *car* on this sign. This strategy is perceived in translations provided by learners of all levels as the following examples illustrate:

- (13) **Motoristas no dejen sus pertenencias en el vehículo (Participant 63, University: 2nd year)**



**(14) Motoristas no dejes cosas de valor en el vehículos (Participant 281, Baccalaureate: 2nd year)**

On the other hand, some participants (around 34.5 per cent) know or may have discovered the meaning of *motorists* precisely due to the presence of the noun *car*.

**(15) Conductores no dejen objetos de valor en su coche (Participant 86, Baccalaureate: 1st year)**

To my surprise, two participants thought that this noun occurred in this sign as a result of a criminal act. They argue that someone had painted the warning with the word *motorist* so as to have fun and make a joke out of it. This is illustrated by the explanation provided by participant 134 (university level) who says that “someone who wanted to have fun wrote *motorists* on this notice.” This interpretation has its origin in a correction that I made in the copy of the questionnaire. As this word was blurred in the copy, I decided to touch it up so that participants could see it properly and they interpreted that this word was not in the original notice.

**(16) Un aviso en la calle. Aviso a los conductores que no dejen cosas de valor en los coches para evitar robos y alguien puso "motoristas" para hacer la broma. (Participant 134, University: 2nd year)**

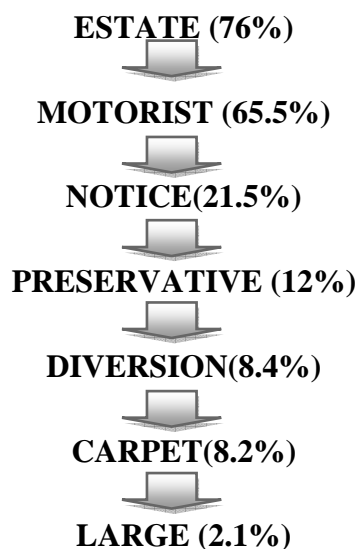
However, the general tendency was to translate *motorist* as Spanish *motoristas* and *car* as *coche* giving way to a clear mistranslation of the notice and leading to an inconsistent message in Spanish since Spanish *motoristas* do not have cars, but motorbikes.

**(17) Motoristas no dejes cosas de valor en tu coche (Participant 93, Baccalaureate: 1st year)**

The seven false friends analysed in task 5 are ranked in Figure 39 (next page) in order of difficulty. The ranking here takes into account the overall percentage of wrong translations per item. Thus, the noun *estate* displays the higher error rate (76 per cent of the translations of this word are incorrect) followed by the word *motorists* which is the second most difficult false friend. A lower proportion of misreadings were found in the warnings including the words *preservative*, *diversion* or *carpet*. It should be also noted here that over 30 percent of the participants in this survey do not show their understanding of these last two nouns *diversion* and *carpet*; however, the subjects who translate them tend to make a correct interpretation of these words. Finally, participants have few problems when they have to translate the phrase *large discounts*. Here the presence of a false friend such as *large* does not exert an influence on the general



interpretation of the phrase which is correctly translated in Spanish “grandes descuentos.”



**FIGURE 39:** Arrangement of FF according to their Degree of Difficulty in Task 5

The next task (Activity 6) embeds some **false friends in a text unit** which takes the form of a news item. With the responses to this activity, it is possible to determine if participants understand or are able to understand the meaning of some false friends by considering some discourse clues. In a similar vein, we will see how the ignorance of those terms could bring about serious misunderstandings and can change the meaning of a piece of news completely. To that purpose, participants are presented with a text which they have to read and then answer a number of questions. Students are advised to pay attention to the words in bold (false friends) as an important clue to answer the questions posed in the multiple choice task. The reading comprehension text is the following:

Famous **solicitor** Harry Davies is being accused of **molesting** a 45-year-old **professor**. The solicitor was arrested in his house located in a well-known **suburb** of London. At the moment of the detention, he was **casually dressed** and **pretended** to be relaxed. However, a simple conversation with him was enough for the police to realize that he was a **bizarre** person. Now the solicitor is being treated in a psychiatric hospital.


**FIGURE 40:** Reading Comprehension Text in Task 6

As aforementioned, the participants are asked to read the text and answer a number of set questions. The questions are formulated in a multiple choice activity. In this way, learners have to show their interpretation of the text by selecting the best choice amid the options provided. The levels of accuracy and inaccuracy observed in the reading comprehension task are summarised in the following table.

ACTIVITY 6	FREQUENCY	✗	✓	% of Inaccuracy	% of Accuracy
BIZARRE	996	377	619	37,9	62,1
CASUALLY	1004	124	880	12,4	87,6
MOLEST	956	424	532	44,4	55,6
PRETEND	1010	380	630	37,6	62,4
PROFESSOR	1002	165	837	16,5	83,5
SOLICITOR	938	373	565	39,8	60,2
SUBURB	998	460	538	46,1	53,9
TOTAL	6904	2303	4601	33,4	66,6


**TABLE 82:** Learners' Interpretation of FF in the Reading Comprehension Task

Concerning the first reading comprehension question, students are asked to identify what is the job of the protagonist. They are given three different options in Spanish: *conductor* meaning “driver,” *abogado* that is “lawyer” or *solicitante* which is the Spanish word for “(a job) applicant.” According to the text, **Harry, the protagonist, is a lawyer.** A total of 60.2 per cent of the participants chose the word *abogado* “lawyer,” and 39.8 per cent claimed that Harry is either a “driver” or “an applicant.” Although the preferred option is that of lawyer, not everybody chooses this noun and knows that *solicitors* generally deal with wills, laws or the like. In fact, the participants' answers to this question reveal that some students are not acquainted with this word and cannot retrieve its meaning from the context provided either. With regard to the subjects who are not familiar with this English word, some of them process or interpret the English word *solicitor* on the basis of the Spanish similar word *solicitante* which means “applicant;” and some others (105 participants) tick the first option and assume that the protagonist is a driver. The reason why they choose this option might be their own reconstruction of the text's meaning. They did not appear to know this word in advance so they create a particular mental representation of the situation and make a number of inferences. Thus, after establishing a new schema to make sense of the text, learners interpret that the protagonist works as a “chauffeur.” Table 83 (next page) provides the frequencies with which participants choose each of the three options.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Driver	105	10,2	11,2	11,2
	<b>Lawyer</b>	<b>565</b>	<b>55,0</b>	<b>60,2</b>	71,4
	Applicant	268	26,1	28,6	100,0
	Total	938	91,3	100,0	
Missing		89	8,7		
Total		1027	100,0		


**TABLE 83:** Learners' Interpretation of SOLICITOR

Concerning the second question (**What is Harry being accused of?**), students should answer that he **had abused somebody**. Over half of the participants (55.6 per cent) believe that the protagonist physically abused a professor; around 28.9 per cent of the respondents interpret that Harry had *disturbed* a professor in some way; and finally, 15.5 per cent of the subjects understand that Harry *had a heated argument* with a professor. The conclusion we can draw from this is that almost half of the participants in this survey did not know the meaning of *molest* and misinterpreted Harry's action.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disturbing	276	26,9	28,9	28,9
	Arguing	148	14,4	15,5	44,4
	<b>Abusing someone</b>	<b>532</b>	<b>51,8</b>	<b>55,6</b>	100,0
	Total	956	93,1	100,0	
Missing		71	6,9		
Total		1027	100,0		


**TABLE 84:** Learners' Interpretation of MOLEST

When participants were asked about the **victim's job**, they did have fewer doubts than with Harry's job. A total of 83.5 per cent of the subjects chose the correct option, that of a *university teacher*. There is a small percentage of respondents (11.4 per cent) who replied that she is a *school teacher* and only 5.1 per cent of them selected the option which qualifies the victim as an apprentice.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	School Teacher	114	11,1	11,4	11,4
	Apprentice	51	5,0	5,1	16,5
	<b>University Teacher</b>	<b>837</b>	<b>81,5</b>	<b>83,5</b>	100,0
	Total	1002	97,6	100,0	
Missing		25	2,4		
Total		1027	100,0		


**TABLE 85:** Learners' Interpretation of PROFESSOR

Concerning the **location** of Harry's house, the correct answer would be a *residential area*, which is what *suburb* means in English. Half of the respondents (53.9 per cent) pointed out that Harry lives in a *residential area* of London; the other half had divergent interpretations; some participants (38.3 per cent), influenced by the Spanish meaning of the similar looking noun *suburbio* meaning "slum," answered that the protagonist of the text lived in a poor area of London; and 7.8 per cent of the respondents understood that the protagonist lived in the *city centre*.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Slums	382	37,2	38,3	38,3
	<b>Residential area</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>52,4</b>	<b>53,9</b>	92,2
	City Centre	78	7,6	7,8	100,0
	Total	998	97,2	100,0	
Missing		29	2,8		
Total		1027	100,0		


**TABLE 86:** Learners' Interpretation of SUBURB

When respondents were asked to indicate what *casually dressed* means, the overriding majority (87.6 per cent) claimed that it conveys the idea of "wearing casual or informal clothes." The decision here appears to be easier for participants to make due to the existence of Spanish expressions including this term, such as "un look casual" (a casual look) or "viste de manera casual" (s/he has a casual style). Nonetheless, the remaining 12.4 per cent understood that the meaning of "casually dressed" referred to the fact of being dressed by chance (6.3 per cent) or being disguised (6.1 per cent).

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Dressed by chance	63	6,1	6,3	6,3
	<b>Wearing informal clothes</b>	<b>880</b>	<b>85,7</b>	<b>87,6</b>	93,9
	Dressed up	61	5,9	6,1	100,0
	Total	1004	97,8	100,0	
Missing		23	2,2		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 87:** Learners' Interpretation of CASUALLY DRESSED


As regards the students' interpretation of the verb *pretend* in the sentence **He pretended to be relaxed**, a total of 62.4 per cent of the participants understand *pretend* as "feign," that is, they interpret that Harry was behaving as if he were completely relaxed but the reality was that he was not so. On the other hand, some respondents (34.1 per cent) understand this utterance as if Harry were trying to control his nervousness. Finally, only 3.6 per cent of the students presume that Harry was not feigning anything; they understood that Harry was really relaxed.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<b>Feigning</b>	<b>630</b>	<b>61,3</b>	<b>62,4</b>	62,4
	Trying	344	33,5	34,1	96,4
	Being	36	3,5	3,6	100,0
	Total	1010	98,3	100,0	
Missing		17	1,7		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 88:** Learners' Interpretation of PRETEND

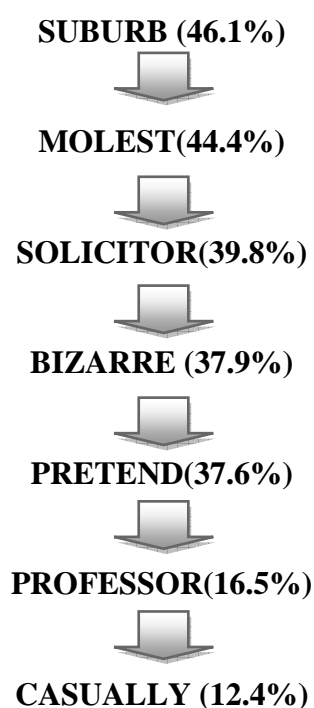
With respect to the adjective *bizarre* which occurs in the following sentence of the text *a simple conversation with him was enough for the police to realise that he was a bizarre person*, 62.1 per cent of the learners claimed that the police soon realised that Harry was a strange person. However, the occurrence of this adjective next to the utterance *he is being treated in a psychiatric hospital* makes participants believe that he was a mentally ill person (related to semantic priming: the expression *psychiatric hospital* activates this interpretation); this is shown by the fact that 33.1 per cent of the

participants marked the third option (i.e. *sick*) as the correct one. A small number of students (4.7 per cent) interpreted this word as meaning *brave*.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Brave	47	4,6	4,7	4,7
	<b>Strange</b>	<b>619</b>	<b>60,3</b>	<b>62,1</b>	66,9
	Sick	330	32,1	33,1	100,0
	Total	996	97,0	100,0	
Missing		31	3,0		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 89:** Learners' Interpretation of BIZARRE

After considering the reading comprehension questions and the analysis of the lexical items individually, it seems necessary to make a summary of the results in this activity (Figure 41) and draw some basic conclusions about the learners' knowledge of these false friends and their strategies to infer the meaning of unknown FF from context.



**FIGURE 41:** Arrangement of FF according to their Degree of Difficulty in Task 6

According to the percentages obtained, the words *molest* and *suburb* are the most problematic ones in terms of their interpretation in the text. Half of the participants are dubious and cannot retrieve the correct meaning of these words from their context of

occurrence. After them, the verb *pretend*, the adjective *bizarre* and the noun *solicitor* are the ones that show the highest level of misinterpretation. The verb phrase *casually dressed* and the noun *professor* are identified and well interpreted by over 80 per cent of the participants; these lexical items seem to be the least problematic for learners. The participants' answers tell us about their understanding of the text. There are many different interpretations of the text: sometimes respondents assume that the protagonist is a lawyer; others claim that Harry is an apprentice; and a last group of learners guesses that he is a driver. As regards the action carried out by the protagonist, some claim that he had abused someone; others maintain that he had disturbed someone; and a last group interpret that he did nothing else than to argue with someone. Concerning the victim, she is said to be a university teacher by most readers; but some of them choose a school teacher and others say that she is an apprentice. In any case, it seems convenient to show how the misinterpretation of these words may distort the meaning of the text partially or totally and how participants may obtain different information from the reading of the same text.

As shown in the learners' replies, the misinterpretation of false friends might change the meaning of a piece of news completely. Below are the participants' understanding and some of the interpretations of this "purpose-built" piece of news. Some participants, especially those who have higher levels of English, tend to interpret the text in the correct way by understanding that a lawyer abused a professor sexually; and the lawyer who was informally dressed was arrested in his house in a residential area of London. Participant 867 shows a perfect understanding of the English text.

**(18) Famous lawyer Harry Davies is accused of sexually abusing a University teacher. The lawyer was arrested in his house located in a well-known residential area of London. At the moment of the detention, he was informally dressed and feigned to be relaxed. However, a simple conversation with him was enough for the police to realize that he was a strange person. (Participant 867, University: 1st year).**

By contrast, some respondents re-construe the meaning of the text and change it completely as you can see from the interpretations shown below (19-28).

⇒ Some students infer that Harry is a job applicant who lives in the slums and disturbs his victim; however, there is no agreement concerning his victim's profession, his appearance or state of mind (some say that he is strange, others interpret that he is ill).

- (19) Famous *applicant* Harry Davies is accused of *disturbing a school teacher*. The applicant was arrested in his house in the *slums* of London. He was *disguised* and *feigned* to be relaxed. The police soon realized that the applicant was a sick person. (Participant 33, Baccalaureate: 1st year).
- (20) Famous *applicant* Harry Davies is accused of *disturbing an apprentice*. The applicant was arrested in his house in the *slums* of London. He was *casually dressed* and *tried* to be relaxed. The police soon realized that the applicant was a *strange* person. (Participant 466, Centre for Modern Languages: 6th year).
- (21) Famous *applicant* Harry Davies is accused of *disturbing a professor*. The applicant was arrested in his house in the *slums* of London. He was *casually dressed* and *tried* to be relaxed. The police soon realized that the applicant was a *strange* person. (Participant 580, Centre for Modern Languages: 8th year).
- (22) Famous *applicant* Harry Davies is accused of *abusing a professor*. The applicant was arrested in his house in the *slums* of London. He was *casually dressed* and *tried* to be relaxed. The police soon realized that the applicant was a *sick* person. (Participant 33, Baccalaureate: 1st year).

⇒ Some other readers think that Harry is a driver who argues with or abuses his victim.

- (23) Famous *driver* Harry Davies is accused of *arguing with an apprentice*. The driver was arrested in his house in the *city centre* of London. He was *casually dressed* and *tried* to be relaxed. The police soon *realized* that the driver was a sick person. (Participant 98, Baccalaureate: 1st year).
- (24) Famous *driver* Harry Davies is accused of *abusing a professor*. The driver was arrested in his house in the *suburbs* of London. He was *casually dressed* and *was relaxed*. The police soon *realized* that the driver was a *sick* person. (Participant 357, Centre for Modern Languages: 4th year).

⇒ However, most subjects maintain that the protagonist is a lawyer; although there are divergent views about the victim's job (teacher, professor or apprentice), the lawyer's action (e.g. disturbance, sexual abuse or argument) and the location of the lawyer's house (residential area or slums). In any case, most of the respondents say that he is strange or ill. Below are some different readings of the text which has Harry, a famous lawyer, as a protagonist.

- (25) Famous *lawyer* Harry Davies is accused of *arguing with a professor*. The lawyer was arrested in his house in a *residential area* of London. He was



- casually* dressed and *tried* to be relaxed. The police soon *realized* that the driver was a *strange* person. (Participant 800, University: 1st year).
- (26) Famous *lawyer* Harry Davies is accused of *abusing* a *school teacher*. The lawyer was arrested in his house in the *slums* of London. He was *casually* dressed and *tried* to be relaxed. The police soon *realized* that the lawyer was a *strange* person. (Participant 631, University: 3rd year).
- (27) Famous *lawyer* Harry Davies is accused of *disturbing* a *professor*. The lawyer was arrested in his house in a *suburb* of London. He was *casually* dressed and *pretended* to be relaxed. The police soon *realized* that the lawyer was a *strange* person. (Participant 660, University: 4th year).
- (28) Famous *lawyer* Harry Davies is accused of *abusing* an *apprentice*. The lawyer was arrested in his house in a *suburb* of London. He was *dressed by chance* and *tried* to be relaxed. The police soon *realized* that the lawyer was an *ill* person. (Participant 180, Baccalaureate: 2nd year).

As can be gathered from the participants' translations, more advanced-level students make fewer mistakes than learners at Baccalaureate level (see, for instance, examples 23 and 26). Still, there are some serious comprehension errors which derive from the learners' lack of awareness of English false friends at all levels which need to be addressed in language classes.

After the analysis of the first part of the questionnaire, it is time to consider the learners' views and their opinions about the difficulty and the importance of false friends in EFL settings. These issues are examined in the second part of the questionnaire. The participants' replies to the questions in this second part of the survey will also cast some light on the teaching and learning techniques used for vocabulary learning in general, and for the teaching and learning of false friends in particular.

Regarding the students' **awareness** of this issue, 96.2 per cent of the participants in this survey claim that they know or have encountered the term "false friend" throughout their academic training. Only 3.8 per cent of the respondents who participated in this study do not seem to be aware of the existence of this metaphor and confuse it with the terms "collocation"<sup>81</sup> and "polysemy."<sup>82</sup>

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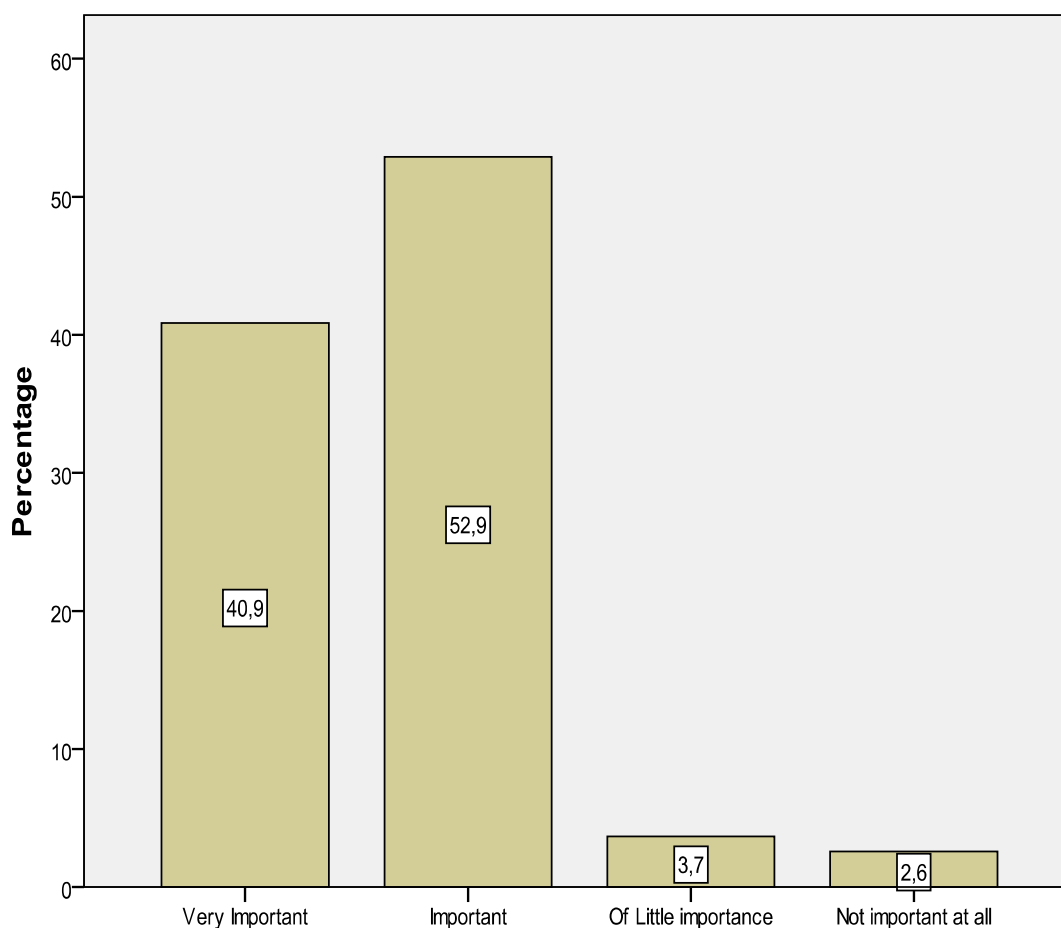
<sup>81</sup>As defined by Sinclair (1991: 170), collocation is traditionally defined as "the occurrence of two or more words within a short space of each other in a text."

<sup>82</sup>Polysemy (also multiple meanings) is a "term in linguistics for words or other items of language with two or more senses (e.g. compare *walk* in *The child started to walk* and in *They live at 23 cheyne walk*)[...]" Definition of "POLYSEMY" in McArthur, Tom (ed.). 1998. *Concise Oxford Companion to the English Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Retrieved from Oxford Reference Online <<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t29.e309>> Accessed on 20/06/2012.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Wrong Definition (POLYSEMY)	24	2,3	2,4	2,4
	<b>Correct Definition (FALSE FRIENDS)</b>	<b>974</b>	<b>94,8</b>	<b>96,2</b>	98,6
	Wrong Definition (COLLOCATIONS)	14	1,4	1,4	100,0
	Total	1012	98,5	100,0	
Missing		15	1,5		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 90:** Learners' Knowledge of the Term "False Friends"

As regards the **importance** given to the phenomenon, 93.8 per cent of the participants consider false friends important (532 subjects) or very important (411 subjects); only 6.3 per cent of the respondents regard these words as of little (37 subjects) or no importance (26 subjects) at all.

**FIGURE 42:** Importance Given to False Friends

Most participants who say that false friends are important or very important maintain that not knowing these words may lead learners to fall into some basic lexical

mistakes. However, this is not the only reason given by the respondents when they try to explain the relevance of these words.

Many participants assert that false friends can give way to important misunderstandings, produce confusion among speakers, provoke uneasy situations and lead to the misinterpretation of innocent messages. In the learners' words:

- ☞ “False friends can lead us to important mistakes and misunderstandings” (Participant 85, Baccalaureate: 1st year; Participant 134, University: 2nd year), that is to say, “they can lead us to misunderstand the content of a conversation, a text or a piece of news.” (Participant 156, University: 2nd year)
- ☞ “False friends can change the meaning of a message totally and we can communicate things that we do not want to” (Participant 161, University: 2nd year). This means that “these words can lead us to errors in comprehension” (Participant 315, Baccalaureate: 1st year). “If you misinterpret a false friend, you may misinterpret a whole sentence (Participant 235, Baccalaureate: 1st year)”
- ☞ “We can insult a person without realising it.” (Participant 81, Baccalaureate: 1st year)

In addition to this, some participants acknowledge the significance of these words in specific areas such as translation.

- ☞ They are important for translation (Participant 154, University: 2nd year)

A second-university student summarises the participants' general opinions about the importance of learning false friends in the following way:

- ☞ “It is necessary to learn false friends to avoid mistakes in the L2 oral and written production” (Participant 84, University: 2nd year)

In contrast to this, there are some learners who maintain that false friends are not crucial in language learning; some students regard these words just as language curiosities which could help them have a better command of the language:

- ☞ Although they are not essential to learn a language, they are quite important (Participant 266, Baccalaureate: 2nd year)
- ☞ They give lexical richness and interest to a language (Participant 135, University: 2nd year)

Among the almost 4 per cent of the subjects who say that false friends are of little importance, we find arguments such as the ones presented by participant 128 who maintains that “it is necessary to learn them but they are as important as any other vocabulary items.” (Participant 128, University: 2nd year)

The questionnaire also reflects on the scope of the problem by asking students about the amount of false friends between English and Spanish. Most of the respondents (834 subjects=81.2 per cent) consider that there are many false friends between these two languages, 12.4 per cent (127 participants) think that there are not so many false friends and 6.4 per cent (66 subjects) do not dare to say if there are many or just a few.

THE LEARNERS' PERCEPTION ON THE AMOUNT OF FALSE FRIENDS					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	A lot	834	<b>81,2</b>	86,8	86,8
	Not so many	127	<b>12,4</b>	13,2	100,0
	Total	961	93,6	100,0	
Missing		66	<b>6,4</b>		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 91:** Learners' Perception about the Number of Existing FF

This questionnaire also aims at examining the **main techniques teachers use for the presentation of this phenomenon** in the classroom. It asks students about how their English teachers approach false friends in their lessons. According to the participants' answers, their teachers frequently use definitions and illustrative examples of false friends in order to introduce these lexical items. In addition, they point out that their English teachers often resort to textbooks as a teaching aid and only sometimes give students a list of false friends with their corresponding translations. Besides and according to the participants' answers, it is not common for teachers to provide synonyms and antonyms of these words in English classes. As regards the techniques teachers never use, the participants in this survey maintain that teachers do not make use of visual aids or dictionaries when it comes to explaining these misleading words.

	<i>Never</i>	<i>Hardly ever</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Frequently</i>	<i>Always</i>
4.1) Lists of FFs with their translation	23,1%	23,7%	<b>27,5%</b>	19,2%	6,7%
4.2) Illustrative examples	3,5%	10,5%	31,1%	<b>42,5%</b>	12,5%
4.3) Definition	6,9%	13,3%	29,7%	<b>34,8%</b>	15,3%
4.4) Synonyms & Antonyms	19,3%	<b>27,4%</b>	27,1%	20,9%	5,3%
4.5) Dictionary use	<b>40,5%</b>	32,8%	16,4%	7,6%	2,7%
4.6) Textbooks	7,9%	14,5%	30,5%	<b>32,8%</b>	14,3%
4.7) Visual aids	<b>27,2%</b>	26,4%	25,7%	16,0%	4,6%

**TABLE 92:** False Friends: Teaching Techniques

In spite of the fact that there was a question about the importance of **textbooks** for the teaching of false friends in the previous task (see Table 92, item 4.6 on the previous page), participants are asked about the presence of these words in their coursebooks and the use language teachers make of textbooks (i.e. if teachers use books as the main teaching material to talk about false friends). They answer that their teachers use textbooks as the main teaching aid to teach English in general. Consequently, it was important to think about the representativeness of false friends in textbooks. The fact that 47.8 per cent of the respondents say that their textbooks do not include any section which specifically deals with false friends is revealing. Almost 50 per cent of the subjects assert that false friends are not integrated into the contents of the books; the immediate consequence is that teachers do not pay attention to these lexical items. By contrast, 44 per cent of the participants maintain that they are aware of some small charts with false friends on certain pages but that they are scarce; finally, 8.2 per cent of the subjects in this survey do not really know if there are sections devoted to these lexical items in their textbooks.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	452	<b>44,0</b>	47,9	47,9
	No	491	<b>47,8</b>	52,1	100,0
	Total	943	91,8	100,0	
Missing		84	<b>8,2</b>		
Total		1027	100,0		

**TABLE 93:** Inclusion of False Friends in the Students' Textbooks

As regards the **strategies learners put into practice** to learn and deal with false friends, the search for clear-cut examples and the use of the word in real texts and conversations are the two main learning techniques which help students understand the meaning and use of these expressions. Apart from this, the participants in this survey declare that they spend some time thinking about the contexts and situations where they would need to use these words. In a similar vein, they consider dictionaries very useful tools to learn more about this linguistic issue. By contrast, asking native speakers, drawing pictures or making lists of false friends with their translation are not considered to be practical and helpful tools for a thorough understanding of false friends. Moreover, participants contend that they do not normally resort to the Internet or write synonyms and antonyms of these words. According to the learners' replies, the most useful way to learn false friends is to remember these words in illustrative examples.

	<i>Never</i>	<i>Hardly ever</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Frequently</i>	<i>Always</i>
6.1) Making Lists of FFs with their translation	<b>24,7%</b>	19,2%	23,1%	21,4%	11,6%
6.2) Making Picture-Meaning associations	<b>31,4%</b>	25,6%	22,0%	15,9%	5,1%
6.3) Looking for clear-cut examples	8,8%	7,7%	22,8%	<b>39,2%</b>	21,5%
6.4) Writing Synonyms & Antonyms	<b>28,4%</b>	27,1%	22,8%	17,4%	4,4%
6.5) Thinking of a real context for the use of this word	14,9%	18,4%	27,0%	<b>30,5%</b>	9,2%
6.6) Looking into its use in texts and conversations	8,4%	15,7%	29,2%	<b>33,9%</b>	12,8%
6.7) Looking up in dictionaries	20,0%	20,3%	24,5%	<b>24,9%</b>	10,3%
6.8) Resorting to the Internet	<b>27,2%</b>	26,5%	20,6%	19,3%	6,4%
6.9) Asking native speakers	<b>49,5%</b>	24,7%	16,3%	7,0%	2,5%

**TABLE 94:** False Friends: Learning Strategies

As shown by the participants' answers to questions 4 and 6 (Part II), there is a clear preference for the use of illustrative examples to teach and learn these lexical items. Both teachers and learners consider examples of word use helpful and instructional. On the contrary, in the opinion of the participants, the use of synonyms and antonyms is not a recurrent technique to approach false friends. However, if we compare the results in Tables 92 and 94, it is possible to perceive some differences between the *techniques* teachers use and the strategies that learners resort to. While respondents say that teachers sometimes provide their students with lists of false friends, some participants assert that they do not normally use lists of false friends as study aids.

In the last part of the questionnaire (question 7), there are some statements which directly inquire into the **problems** learners have **in their production and reception of English** as a result of the influence of false friends. In relation to L2 comprehension (reading and listening), the participants are asked whether they think that similarities between words in Spanish and English facilitate the comprehension of an English text and whether the context is enough for a correct understanding of unknown false friends. With reference to the production side (writing and speaking), the subjects are invited to reflect on the role of the mother tongue and its influence in the productive use of English and they are also asked about their fear to make mistakes and their level of risk-taking, that is, if learners sometimes make use of some invented words or even resort to English false friends consciously in order to keep a conversation going.

As regards *comprehension* (Table 95 below), learners say that they tend to resort to the L1 as a point of reference for the interpretation of those words which they are not familiar with. Over half of the participants accept that false friends and other unknown words may hinder L2 comprehension. Over 90 per cent of the subjects maintain that it is important to study false friends consciously since the context does not always lead to a correct understanding of these words; and finally, we find a balance between the subjects who somewhat state the advantage of cognates and those who do not seem to trust similarities between the L2 and the L1 for a correct comprehension of the L2.

At the level of L2 comprehension ...(reading and listening)	YES	NO
7.1) I usually establish semantic links between new L2 words and similar forms in the L1 <sup>83</sup>	66,6%	33,4%
7.2) It is difficult for me to understand oral and written messages containing English false friends or other unknown words	50,5%	49,5%
7.3) Context of occurrence is not always enough for a correct understanding of English false friends	92,9%	7,1%
7.4) Similarities between L2 and L1 words always facilitate comprehension of the L2	51,5%	48,5%

**TABLE 95: False Friends: Problems in Comprehension**

Concerning the learners' *productive use* of English, broadly speaking, the participants do not think that their mother tongue exerts a negative influence in their use of English. This does not mean that they are not concerned with the errors they make during the production process. In fact, over 80 per cent of the respondents maintain that they care about mistakes; only 32.4 per cent of the participants say that they sometimes might use false friends in order to fill in a gap of knowledge in their vocabulary. According to many participants (53 per cent), false friends are not difficult items.

At the production level...(writing and speaking)	YES	NO
7.3) In general, my mother tongue influences my L2 production negatively	47,5%	52,5%
7.4) I am worried about making grammatical or lexical mistakes when writing or speaking in the L2	82,6%	17,4%
7.5) I sometimes make use of English false friends in order to keep the communicative act going	32,4%	67,6%
7.6) In my opinion, false friends are confusing words, difficult to learn, grasp and use.	47,1%	52,9%

**TABLE 96: False Friends: Problems in Production**

Last but not least, the questionnaire includes a space for comments. It was used by 7.1 per cent of the participants (see valid percent in Table 97). Most of them wished me good luck with the research and wrote that it was interesting for them to participate

<sup>83</sup> This statement is based on Hall's idea that says that in the absence of semantic cues learners automatically assume that L2 word forms which share phonological and/or orthographic form with the L1 (Hall, 2000, 2009) are translation equivalents.

in research projects of this nature, some of the comments also pointed to the fact that they missed the Galician version of the questionnaire.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	73	7,1	7,1	7,1
	No	954	92,9	92,9	100,0
	Total	1027	100,0	100,0	

**TABLE 97: Students' Comments about the Questionnaire**

Here is one of the comments made by one of the students:

- ☞ “The questionnaire is amusing and it somewhat helps us to improve ;)”  
(Participant 91, Baccalaureate: 1st year)

#### 4.6.2. Qualitative Analysis

This section offers a *qualitative description* of the data provided by the questionnaire. An individual analysis of the findings for each of the items under study might be helpful to comprehend the difficulties learners have in the understanding of these lexical items. The qualitative analysis of the items will be organised according to the level of difficulty observed in the questionnaire. Thus I will start by discussing the word **crime** which tends to be misinterpreted on most occasions, and I will finally deal with the adjective **large**, which is mostly interpreted in the correct way. Likewise, this section gives a brief explanation of the difficulties found in the interpretation of each of the false friends examined.

► **CRIME** (noun): According to the results obtained in the word recognition task, the noun **crime** is mostly associated with the notion of murder. It is remarkable that very few participants know that the word **crime** is a comprehensive term that may denote not only a robbery but also a murder in English.

► **EVENTUAL**<sup>84</sup> (adjective): In task 4, students are asked to choose between the adjectives *casual* and **eventual** in combination with *workers* to express the idea of “temporary workers.” The results show the participants’ preference for the collocation *eventual workers*. This seems to suggest that learners are assuming that the adjective **eventual** is a synonym of “temporary” or “non-permanent.” The reason for the students’ choice might be in the link learners establish between English *eventual*, meaning

<sup>84</sup> In this second part of the study, the adverb *eventually* is looked through its corresponding adjective *eventual*. Errors in this adjective can be transferred to its corresponding adverb *eventually*.



“closing,” “final” and its seemingly corresponding Spanish counterpart *eventual* which means “temporary.”

► **ESTATE** (noun): This noun occurs in the set phrase *estate agents*, which is misunderstood on many occasions. The noun *estate* tends to be confused with *state* both in production (pp. 155-156 and 260) and in comprehension (pp. 365). Regarding the latter, most participants show this confusion when translating *estate agents* into Spanish as “agentes de estado,” that is, police officers, government agents or something of the kind.

► **CASUALTY** (noun): The noun *casualty* is examined in activity 2 of the questionnaire. This noun is given its corresponding definition; thus it is defined as “injured or killed in an accident.” However, many participants indicate that the definition provided in the task is not correct; this suggests that learners do not know the real sense of this English noun. It is very likely that learners establish a connection with the Spanish homograph *casualidad* which means “by chance;” this might explain why Spanish learners consider this definition inaccurate.

► **MOTORIST** (noun): The word *motorist* occurs in activity 5. This lexical item poses problems for a correct interpretation of the message on the police notice (see Figure 38, pp. 363). Most participants translate this word into Spanish as *motorista*, that is, someone who rides a motorbike. Therefore, Spanish learners of English interpret this warning as being addressed to people who have motorcycles instead of car-owners. As can be gathered from this, the reading of this sign is highly influenced by the Spanish word *motorist*, which means precisely “motorcyclist.”

► **COMMODITY** (noun): The plural form of this noun, *commodities*, is introduced in activity 3. The fact that most participants state that bread and meat cannot be regarded as commodities shows that Spanish learners have not acquired the correct notion of this word. The participants’ replies somewhat indicate that the Spanish similar item *comodidad* is exerting an influence on the interpretation of this noun in the L2. Thus, it is very likely that learners say that bread and meat are *not* commodities because they do not know this word in English and resort to their L1 as a way of finding a solution and compensating for their lack of knowledge. Another reason for this choice could be that although learners have studied this word before, the Spanish noun *comodidad* having nothing to do with essential products such as bread and meat but with “comforts,” is quite entrenched in the learners’ mental lexicons and is exerting a great influence on the processing of this English noun.

► **INHABITED** (adjective): This adjective is mostly connected with the idea of “abandoned,” as shown in activity 1 by a great majority of the learners. The analysis of *in* as a negative prefix might have had an effect on the misinterpretation of this term. The learners’ association of this adjective with the image of the “ruined house” shows this mistaken inference. Another issue which could have conditioned the learners’ decision to link *inhabited* with the wrong image might be the adjective *deshabitado* in the participants’ mother tongue which precisely means “uninhabited.” This adjective is certainly problematic and needs to be considered in the EFL classroom due to its deceptive morphology.

► **BLANK** (noun): This noun occurs in activity 3 in the form of a collocation *a blank expression on your face* which most participants consider incorrect. In this sense, the learners’ responses ultimately show their limited knowledge of this word.

► **ASSIST** (verb): The English verb *assist* is assigned the wrong meaning in activity 2. However, many participants claim that the definition given (i.e. “to be present at”) is correct. This shows that most learners are understanding the English verb in the wrong way.

► **LOCALS** (noun): Another noun which produces great confusion in terms of both interpretation and production is the noun *local(s)*. This form is presented in activity 3 in the phrase *\*locals to rent*; surprisingly, over half of the participants say that it is possible to use it this way.

► **FINE** (adjective): Students are asked to say whether the adjective *fine* can combine with the noun *wine* in the phrase *fine wine* or not. Almost half of the participants think that to say *fine wine* is incorrect. This shows that the participants have a partial knowledge of this adjective.

► **SUBURB** (noun): The noun *suburb* occurs in activity 6. Its notable similarity with Spanish *suburbio* must have confused learners in the interpretation of the English noun. Forty-six percent of the participants mistakenly assume that a *suburb* is a shanty town.

► **CASUAL** (adjective): The adjective *casual* is used in two different activities (activity 4 and activity 6) and takes two different forms. In activity 4, learners must decide whether they would say *casual* or *eventual workers* in English; in activity 6, students must reflect on the real meaning of the phrase *casually dressed*. The learners’ preference for *eventual workers* shows that they are not totally acquainted with the full meaning and use of *casual*. Less than a quarter of the participants are familiar with this use of *casual*. On the other hand, the corresponding use of *casual* as an adverb in the

phrase *casually dressed* is not so problematic. Eighty per cent of the subjects responding to this question know that it means “wearing informal clothes.” The overall results reveal that this adjective is a word of average difficulty for Spanish learners.

► **MOLEST** (verb): The verb *molest* occurs in the reading activity (Task 6). Answers to this activity show that this verb is frequently interpreted as a synonym of “disturb.” This mistake has its origin in the influence of the learners’ mother tongue.

► **SOLICITOR** (noun): This word also appears in the reading comprehension task (activity 6). The participants’ responses to this task show that it is not an easy word for Spanish learners to understand and interpret. Although there are students who know that it refers to a lawyer, a significant number of the participants in this study answer that a *solicitor* is an applicant or a driver.

► **NOTICE** (noun): The noun *notice* occurs in activities 3 and 5 in the phrases *\*give someone a good notice* and *police notice*, respectively. The first collocation confuses learners who think it is correct. With regard to the phrase *police notice*, learners tend to provide a good translation for it. On average, we can say that this noun poses some but not many problems in the interpretation of English.

► **BIZARRE** (adjective): The English adjective *bizarre* denotes being peculiar or strange. Over one third of the subjects interpret that the protagonist of the text in activity 6 is ill. The strategy of guessing meaning from context might not have helped learners discover that *bizarre* means strange in English.

► **PRETEND** (verb): The verb *pretend* is also present in the reading comprehension text of activity 6. Learners have to grasp the meaning of the sentence *He pretended to be relaxed* and say if the protagonist of the story is relaxed, tries to be relaxed or feigns to be relaxed. Almost half of the participants understand that protagonist “is” in this state or “tries to be” in this state. Therefore, this confusion is recurrent and needs to be addressed in the English classroom.

► **ACCOMMODATE** (verb): This verb occurs in the phrase *to accommodate a friend* in activity 3. Many students think that the use of *accommodate* in this collocation is not acceptable in English. This means that learners do not know the different contexts and the word combinations in which this English verb can be used.

► **COLLAR** (noun): The noun *collar* is analysed in the word recognition task (Task 1). The students’ association of this English noun with the image of a necklace leads us to think that many participants are not familiar with this English word and interpret it with reference to the Spanish homograph *collar* (“necklace”).

- **REALISE** (verb): The verb *realise* is analysed through the collocation *\*realise an investigation* in activity 3. A large group of participants accept this collocation as correct. This might mean that learners could have used this verb in this way. The Spanish verb *realizar* which can be used in this context might have been activated in the learners' minds when they accepted this word combination as correct.
- **PIPE** (noun): Activity 3 presents this word in the phrase *water pipe*. Some learners (30 per cent) maintain that they would not use this noun in this phrase. This means that students might not be acquainted with the real sense of this word and its possible word combinations.
- **LECTURE** (noun): The noun *lecture* confuses some learners who associate it with the picture which represents a boy "reading" a book. The confusion originates in the Spanish word *lectura* which means "reading." Spanish learners choose the wrong picture influenced by the Spanish concept. However, according to the overall results, most of the participants in this survey seem to be familiar with this English noun.
- **COLLEGE** (noun): The noun *college* is included in activity 2 where students should indicate if a *college* is "a public school of primary education" as the proposed definition suggests. Most students answer negatively, although there are some learners (27.4 per cent) who marked it as correct. This means that most learners are acquainted with this word and know that a *college* does not provide students with primary education.
- **FIRM** (noun): The noun *firm* is defined as "signature" in activity 2. A quarter of the learners claim that it is a valid definition of this term. Most students mark it as incorrect. The main conclusion to be drawn here is that some students are still led by their first language in their interpretation of *firm*.
- **CAREER** (noun): The word *career* appears in activity 4. Students are asked to underline the word that best fits to the following linguistic context: *I do not want to study a university CAREER/DEGREE*. A considerable amount of learners opted for *university career* which means that this word has not been fully acquired by Spanish learners. Perhaps the high frequency of the phrase *carrera universitaria* in Spanish might have had an important effect on the learners' preference for *career* in this sentence.
- **SENSIBLE** (adjective): This adjective occurs in activity 4 where students should say whether *SENSITIVE* or *SENSIBLE* implies crying very easily. Although most participants choose the right option, there are students who underline the adjective *sensible* (negative transfer from the learners' mother tongue).

- **CONDUCTOR** (noun): The noun *conductor* is examined in activity 1. Although some participants link this noun with the image of a driver, most learners show their understanding of this noun thus connecting it with the image of the director of an orchestra. Therefore, this noun is directly linked to its corresponding concept in the L2.
- **PROFESSOR** (noun): The noun *professor* occurs in activity 6. This term is not as problematic as the previous ones as far as its interpretation is concerned. In fact, over 83 per cent of the respondents know that it refers to an university teacher.
- **CAMP** (noun): The noun *camp* occurs in activity 3 in the phrase *summer camp*. Despite its conspicuous similarity with Spanish *campo*, most learners are familiar with this English noun in this collocation.
- **APPOINT** (verb): The meaning and use of the verb *appoint* is analysed in task 3. Most students maintain that *\*appoint with a gun* is incorrect in English. In effect, this phrase is a calque from the Spanish expression *apuntar con una pistola*. Roughly 15 in 100 students fall into the trap and say that this word combination might be acceptable.
- **PRESERVATIVE** (noun): This noun is analysed in activity 5. It forms part of a label which literally says *no artificial colours or preservatives*. Some participants, in particular, students with a lower level of English are influenced by the Spanish term *preservativo* (“condom”) and misinterpret the real content of the message on this label.
- **QUIET** (adjective): This adjective is studied in activity 1. Most subjects seem to know that *quiet* denotes the idea of not having too much noise around. A high proportion of the participants in this survey associate this word with the picture of the boy asking for quietness or silence.
- **ROPE** (noun): The noun *rope* is normally associated with a string. The learners’ confusion brought about by the image of the clothes (Spanish *ropa*) is not highly significant. Most participants recognise this word and its corresponding meaning.
- **MAYOR** (noun): The noun *mayor* is included in activity 2; the definition provided is the correct one and most learners seem to be familiar with it.
- **DIVERSION** (noun): Learners encounter this word in activity 5. Surprisingly, this noun is misinterpreted by only a few of the respondents in their translations. There is little influence of the Spanish similar word *diversión* as perceived in the interpretations provided by Spanish learners.
- **CARPET** (noun): The word *carpet* is examined in activity 5. Learners should produce a suitable translation for *carpet department*. Most of the participants provide the right translation of this term although there are a few translations which reflect the

influence of the Spanish term *carpeta*. The translation of this phrase as *papelería* (stationer's shop) is a proof of this influence.

► **EXIT** (noun): This noun is mostly understood in the English way. There is a low percentage of students who choose the word *exit* in a context which requires the noun *success*.

► **SUCCESS** (noun): The noun *success* is selected by most learners in activity 4 in the sentence *Her last book is a big success*. This clearly indicates that Spanish students have not been influenced by the meaning of the corresponding homograph in the L1 (*suceso* that means “happening”) but they have the English concept of this word in their minds.

► **EMBARRASSED** (adjective): This adjective is examined in activity 1. Only 2 in 100 learners choose the image of the pregnant woman. These subjects have obviously been influenced by Spanish. In Spanish the word *embarazada* means “pregnant.” However, this adjective seems to have been correctly learnt by most learners.

► **LARGE** (adjective): The adjective *large* occurs in activity 5 in the phrase *large discounts*. Most learners translate it in the right way. Only 2 per cent of the participants make the error of translating it literally into Spanish *largo*, meaning “long.”

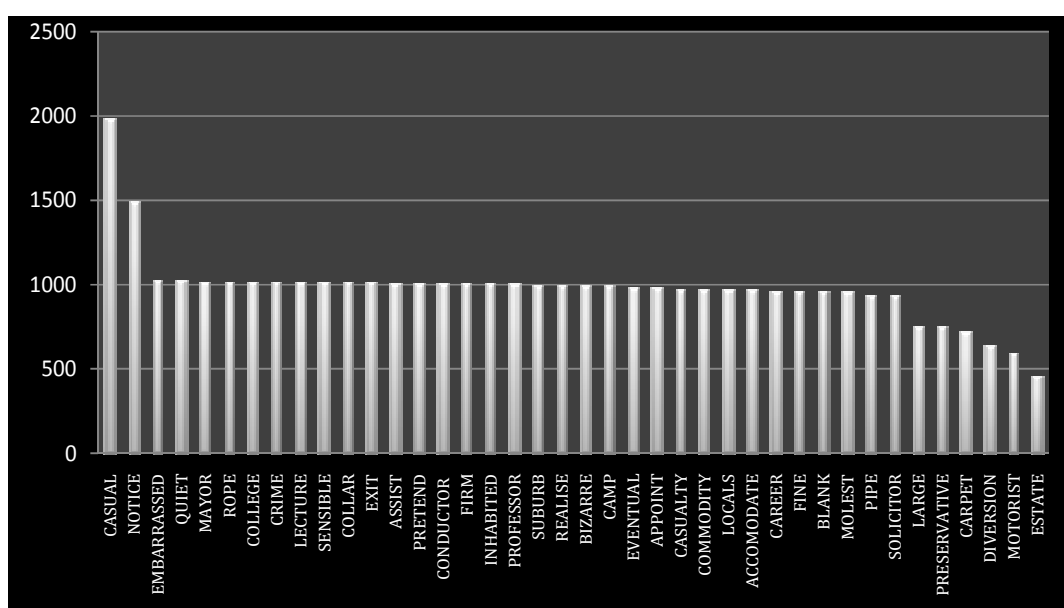
In sum, the results show that learners interpret certain English words (e.g. *crime*, *eventual* or *estate*) through connections with the Spanish orthographic neighbours (i.e. *crimen*, *eventual* or *estado*). The mediation of the L1 lexical form leads students to misunderstand even whole phrases (see, for instance, *carpet department*). By contrast, some high-frequency English words (e.g. *embarrassed*) tend to be directly processed through the L2. The ensuing discussion examines these findings more thoroughly.

#### 4.7. General Discussion of Results

As foreseen, the present survey (Study II) examines the learners' interpretation of false friends in different contexts. So far the results have been presented taking into account the questionnaire division into parts (Part I and II) and activities (Task 1, 2, etc.). This section aims at providing an overview of the data gathered from the analysis of the total number of questionnaires (1027). It is the prelude to the conclusions presented in the following section; some details which were left out in other sections will be further clarified and explained here in more detail.

#### 4.7.1. Quantitative Results

This section provides a general overview of the findings derived from the examination, exploration and analysis of 1027 questionnaires. Issues such as the students' involvement and the percentages of correct/incorrect answers will be mentioned. First of all, it is important to point out that the amount of data is not the same for all false friends and may vary considerably. In fact, the number of responses obtained depends on the learners' familiarity with the false friend in question. In a similar vein, the nature of the activity in which they occur may also have an impact on the learners' reactions towards particular false friends. In the two extremes of the cline, we find the adjective *casual*<sup>85</sup> with the highest number of responses; and at the other end, the noun *estate* which tends to be eluded by students. The number of replies per item somewhat indicates the students' confidence about their knowledge of these words. The fact that students do not solve some questions may mean that they are unsure about their answers. Apart from that, the learners' preference for certain activities may explain why some lexical items provide a higher amount of research data.



**FIGURE 43:** Number of Replies per Item

<sup>85</sup> The number of responses for the adjective *casual* is higher than for other lexical items because it occurs in two different activities of the questionnaire (activity 4 and 6). In activity 6, the adjective *casual* is explored in the phrase *casually dressed*; therefore, this adjective is examined through the corresponding adverb *casually*. The number of interpretations of the noun *notice* is also higher than the rest because it occurs in activities 3 and 5. This explains why the frequencies of these lexical items exceed 1027, which is the total number of questionnaires finally collected.

Following this line of argument and attending to the number of responses per item, it has been observed that students appear to be confident about their knowledge and understanding of some false friends. As a matter of fact, only between 1 and 8 participants did not show their interpretation of words such as *embarrassed*, *quiet*, *mayor* or *rope*, that is to say, less than 9 respondents decided to leave the questions about these four words unanswered. However, there are some other false friends that learners seem to be not sure about. In fact, many participants avoid providing their own translations of words, such as *estate*, *motorist*, *diversion* or *carpet*. Between 50 percent and 30 percent of the subjects in this survey did not respond to the questions concerning these words. The following tables show those false friends which students seem to be confident about (high level of response) and those false friends which they try to avoid (low level of response).

INTERPRETATION High participation	FREQ.	✖	✓
CASUAL	1989	44,6	55,4
NOTICE	1490	39,2	60,8
EMBARRASSED	1026	2,7	97,3
QUIET	1025	11	89
MAYOR	1019	8,6	91,4
ROPE	1019	10,6	89,4
COLLEGE	1015	27,4	72,6
CRIME	1015	98,4	1,6
LECTURE	1015	30,8	69,2
SENSIBLE	1014	19	81

INTERPRETATION Low participation	FREQ.	✖	✓
ESTATE	458	76	24
MOTORIST	595	65,5	34,5
DIVERSION	644	8,4	91,6
CARPET	723	8,2	91,8
LARGE	747	2,1	97,9
PRESERVATIVE	747	12	88
SOLICITOR	938	39,8	60,2
PIPE	943	31,6	68,4
MOLEST	956	44,4	55,6
BLANK	962	61,4	38,6

**TABLE 98:** The 10 Least-/ Most- Avoided False Friends

A first glance at the results shows that having a high level of response does not necessarily mean that Spanish learners know the English word but that they think they know it. Thus, 1015 of the total number of participants (1027) responded to the question on the word *crime* and 98.4 per cent of those subjects seem to be not fully acquainted with the comprehensive nature of this English term. Nonetheless, the number of responses obtained for the analysis of the false friends included in the questionnaire is sufficient to draw definite conclusions on the students' interpretation of these false friends even in those cases where students are reluctant to answer.

In order to have a clear view of the frequency of participation, the number of misunderstandings and the percentages for the correct interpretation of the false friends



analysed, Table 99 illustrates the students' responses (as well as the percentage of correct understandings and miscomprehensions) in the questionnaire.

FALSE FRIENDS INTERPRETATION	FREQUENCY	✖	✓	% of Inaccuracy	% of Accuracy
ACCOMODATE	969	360	609	37,2	62,8
APPOINT	978	145	833	14,8	85,2
ASSIST	1010	618	392	61,2	38,8
BIZARRE	996	377	619	37,9	62,1
BLANK	962	591	371	61,4	38,6
CAMP	989	152	837	15,4	84,6
CAREER	966	239	727	24,7	75,3
CARPET	723	59	664	8,2	91,8
CASUAL	1989	888	1101	44,6	55,4
CASUALTY	976	654	322	67	33
COLLAR	1012	348	664	34,4	65,6
COLLEGE	1015	278	737	27,4	72,6
COMMODITY	971	633	338	65,2	34,8
CONDUCTOR	1007	179	828	17,8	82,2
CRIME	1015	999	16	98,4	1,6
DIVERSION	644	54	590	8,4	91,6
EMBARRASSED	1026	28	998	2,7	97,3
ESTATE	458	348	110	76	24
EVENTUAL(ly)	985	764	221	77,6	22,4
EXIT	1012	54	958	5,3	94,7
FINE	964	469	495	48,7	51,3
FIRM	1004	252	752	25,1	74,9
INHABITED	1004	654	350	65,1	34,9
LARGE	747	16	731	2,1	97,9
LECTURE	1015	313	702	30,8	69,2
LOCALS	971	532	439	54,8	45,2
MAYOR	1019	88	931	8,6	91,4
MOLEST	956	424	532	44,4	55,6
MOTORIST	595	390	205	65,5	34,5
NOTICE	1490	584	906	39,2	60,8
PIPE	943	298	645	31,6	68,4
PRESERVATIVE	747	90	657	12	88
PRETEND	1010	380	630	37,6	62,4
PROFESSOR	1002	165	837	16,5	83,5
QUIET	1025	113	912	11	89
REALISE	997	324	673	32,5	67,5
ROPE	1019	108	911	10,6	89,4

<b>SENSIBLE</b>	1014	193	821	19	81
<b>SOLICITOR</b>	938	373	565	39,8	60,2
<b>SUCCESS</b>	1012	54	958	5,3	94,7
<b>SUBURB</b>	998	460	538	46,1	53,9
<b>TOTAL</b>	40173	14048	26125	35,0	65,0

**TABLE 99:** Overall Results: Interpretation

As aforementioned, the noun *crime*, one of the items in the list of false friends with the highest level of participation (Table 98) also shows the highest proportion of misinterpretation. *Crime* is leading the ranking of those words which tend to be misinterpreted by Spanish learners of English. Table 100 shows those false friends which are most frequently misinterpreted by Spanish learners in the data provided by the questionnaire.

<b>INTERPRETATION</b>	<b>RAW FREQUENCY</b>	<b>% OF INACCURACY</b>
<b>CRIME</b>	1015	98,4
<b>EVENTUAL</b>	985	77,6
<b>ESTATE</b>	458	76
<b>CASUALTY</b>	976	67
<b>MOTORIST</b>	595	65,5
<b>COMMODITY</b>	971	65,2
<b>INHABITED</b>	1004	65,1
<b>BLANK</b>	962	61,4
<b>ASSIST</b>	1010	61,2
<b>LOCALS</b>	971	54,8

**TABLE 100:** The Most Problematic False Friends in Terms of their Interpretation

As we can see from the table above, the noun *crime* and the adjective *eventual* are at the top of the list in terms of their high difficulty of interpretation. Activity 4 tests the students' interpretation of *eventual*. The fact that most participants prefer the collocation *eventual workers* to *casual workers* suggests that learners understand *eventual* as "temporary." Around 77.6 per cent of the subjects understand that *eventual* means "non-permanent" instead of "final." At the same time, only 22.4 per cent of the participants choose to say that *casual workers* is the correct option in English. This shows that 77.6 per cent of the students do not know the real meaning of this adjective. Other English words which are misinterpreted by Spanish people are the following:

*estate*, which is frequently translated into Spanish as *estado*; *casualty* which is attributed the meaning of “coincidental, fortuitous;” *motorist* interpreted as *motorcyclist*; *commodity*, which seems to be understood as “amenities;” the adjective *inhabited*, wrongly associated with the image of a derelict house. In the case of *blank*, participants do not think that a *blank expression* is correct; therefore, they ignore that *blank* may mean expressionless. Finally, the verb *assist* also appears to be problematic. Over 60 percent of the participants assert that it means “to be present at a particular place;” therefore, they confuse it with *attend*. These lexical items display the highest number of incorrect answers; however, there are some false friends which are not so problematic. As a matter of fact, the false friends which display the highest amount of correct interpretations or those which show little degree of misunderstandings are shown in the chart below:

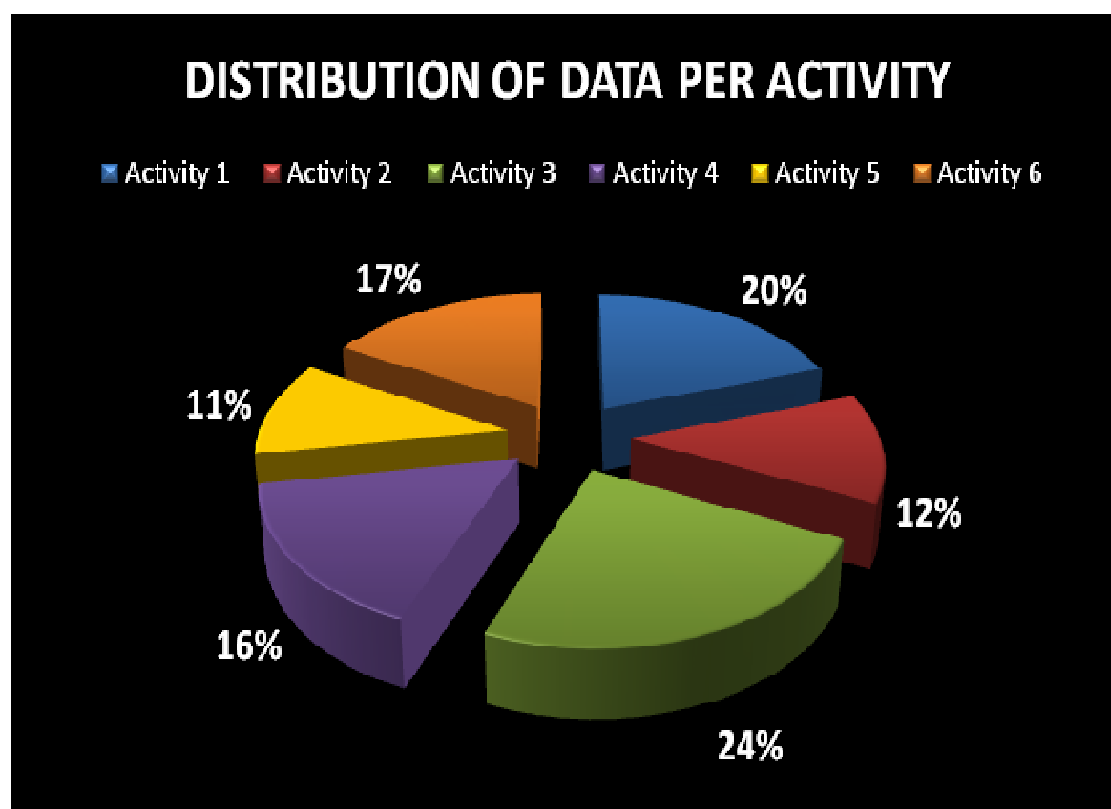
INTERPRETATION	RAW FREQUENCY	% OF ACCURACY
LARGE	747	97,9
EMBARRASSED	1026	97,3
EXIT	1012	94,7
CARPET	723	91,8
DIVERSION	644	91,6
MAYOR	1019	91,4
ROPE	1019	89,4
QUIET	1025	89
PRESERVATIVE	747	88
APPOINT	978	85,2

**TABLE 101:** False Friends Exhibiting a High Degree of Understanding

High-frequency adjectives such as *large* and *embarrassed* are frequently interpreted in the correct way. Participants clearly know that *large* means “big” and *embarrassed* means “ashamed.” The same happens with words such as *exit*, *carpet*, *mayor*, *quiet* and *appoint*; these lexical items appear to be easy for over 80 per cent of the participants. Even less frequent English words, such as *diversion* or *preservative*, do not pose serious problems.

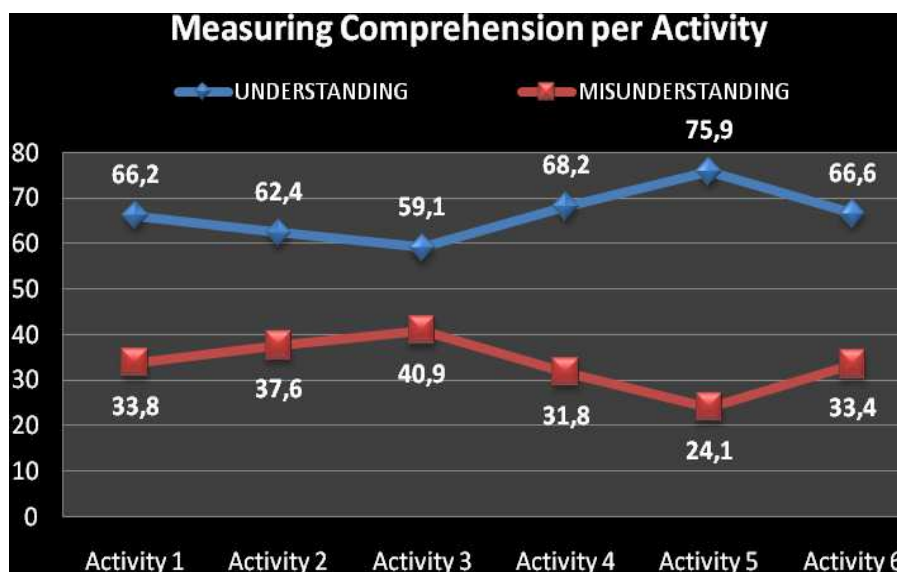
The nature of the activities proposed might have had an impact on the results obtained. Table 99 with the overall results does not detail the distribution of responses per activity. It does not say anything about the amount of data provided by each of the activities proposed and the number of right/wrong answers per activity. The pie graph

below, Figure 44 aims at showing the percentage that each activity represents in the overall results. Activity 3, followed by activity 1 and 6 are the ones which contain the highest amount of data in this study. They represent 61 per cent of the overall results. Activities 2, 4 and 5 also provide a good amount of data reaching up to 39 per cent of the final count. The number of lexical items included in these tasks together with the level of difficulty of the tasks may have had an impact on this. In fact, activities 5 and 6 are expected to give the same amount of data because they include seven false friends each. However, the number of replies given to activity 5 was slightly lower than the number of answers obtained for activity 6. The difference in the quantity of information provided by each of these activities somewhat indicates the complexity of the activities proposed. Thus, activity 5 seems to be the most difficult task (this is also supported by the students' comments during the completion of the questionnaire).



**FIGURE 44:** Percentage of the Evidence Provided per Activity

Irrespective of this distribution of data, it is interesting to compare the proportion of misunderstandings observed per activity. The following figure shows the percentage of positive and negative responses per task. It gives a general overview of the level of comprehension per activity. The red line indicates the levels of misunderstandings, and the blue line stands for the percentage of correct interpretations per individual task.



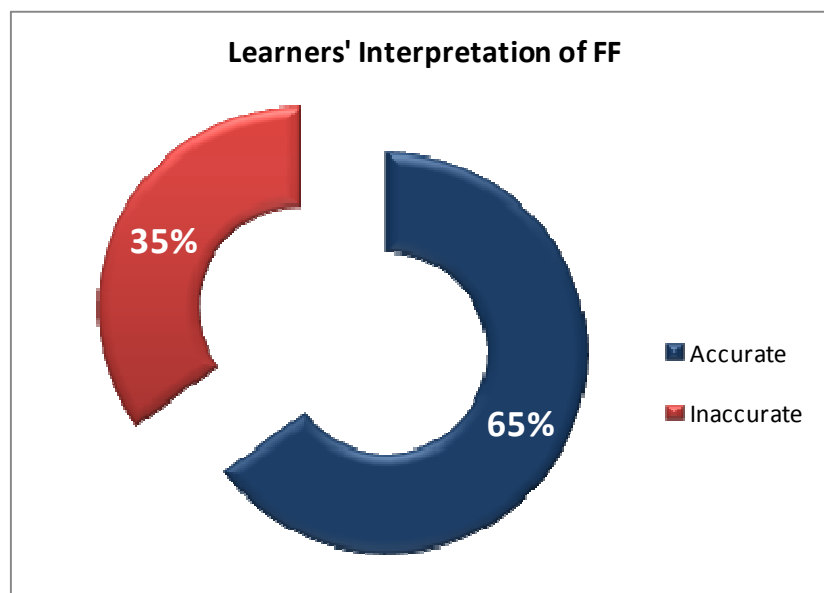
**FIGURE 45:** Level of Comprehension per Task

The height of the red line in activity 3 indicates that this task is the one students fail most, while the peak of the blue line in activities 5, 6 and 1 illustrates that the words in these two tasks are the ones that students know best.

It is possible to identify three different tendencies in these results. The first one is represented by activities 1, 2, 4 and 6; the second is displayed in activity 3; and finally, activity 5 shows a different tendency. Data derived from the analysis of the first group of activities (1, 2, 4 and even task 6) make it clear that the proportion of correct answers is greater than the proportion of incorrect replies (over 60 per cent vs. around 40 per cent, respectively). The second set of tasks (activity 3) shows a slightly different proportion of correct/incorrect replies; the percentage of correct interpretations is under 60 per cent while the percentage of misinterpretations is beyond 40 per cent. Finally, activity 5 shows a relatively low level of misinterpretation (24.1 per cent). At first sight, this might contradict the argument that this activity is difficult for students; however, this is not the case. The results presented in Figure 45 are based on the results provided by those *who translated* the signs. They do not reflect the results of the many students who did not complete activity 5 and who probably did not understand the signs.

Considering the replies provided by the participants in the questionnaire, it seems necessary to pay attention to the overall results in a comprehensive way in order to have a general overview of the findings from the whole analysis. The pie chart below shows the percentage of accurate and inaccurate interpretations observed in the data obtained from the questionnaires. It reveals that the amount of accurate interpretations exceeds

the percentage representing the learners' misinterpretations. Nonetheless, 35 per cent of the answers analysed show that there are difficulties with some words. They also suggest that the presence of some particular false friends may mislead Spanish learners and may lead them to the misinterpretation of whole messages.



**FIGURE 46:** Overall Percentage of Understanding

Figure 46 illustrates the overall results which reveal that 65 percent of the replies are correct while 35 percent of the answers are incorrect. More than half of the answers to the activities show that students interpret false friends in the right way. They know the real meaning of these words in their English context and show no interference with Spanish. The qualitative discussion of these results may provide additional details concerning these findings.

#### *4.7.2. Qualitative Results*

The qualitative analysis of the participants' responses to the questionnaire will help us understand the learners' interpretation of false friends and any possible misunderstandings which may have arisen from the occurrence of these words. This section provides a general overview of the main comprehension problems observed and will shed some light on the role of context for the interpretation of false friends. Thus the analysis offered here will be divided into 4 main blocks in order to show the results of the interpretation of false friends in different contexts: in isolation, in a linguistic context, in a situational context and as part of a given text.

#### 4.7.2.1. Interpretation of False Friends in Isolation

In Activity 1 (associating words and pictures) and Activity 2 (matching words and definitions), students are brought face to face with words in isolation, no context is provided. The aim of both activities is to look into the learners' semantic knowledge of these words and to measure the impact of the L1 in the recognition of these words.

##### 4.7.2.1.1. Recognition

Data from the *word recognition* (also called *picture association*) task (Activity 1) suggest that the students' mental representations of some false friends are influenced by the L1. Thus, according to the learners' responses, the words: **crime**, **inhabited**, **collar**, **lecture** and **conductor** are frequently attributed the Spanish referents; thus, these words are thought to mean "murder," "uninhabited," "necklace," "reading" and "driver," respectively. On the other hand, there are high-frequency terms, such as the English adjectives **embarrassed**, **quiet** and the noun **rope** which are interpreted in the English way and they are understood as "ashamed," "noiseless" and "string." They are, therefore, processed through the second language. Therefore, the strength of association between the L1 and L2 varies depending on the false friend we are dealing with.

##### 4.7.2.1.2. Semantic Awareness

The second task of the questionnaire where students are asked to indicate whether the definitions provided correspond to the words presented, aims at finding out about the students' knowledge of the referents of some high-frequency words which are false friends with Spanish lexical items. The learners' replies to this task reveal the participants' semantic knowledge of words such as **assist**, **casualty**, **college**, **mayor** and **firm**, and their associations with the Spanish lookalikes *asistir*, *casualidad*, *colegio*, *mayor* and *firma* which typically have a different meaning. Thus the overall results in this activity show that learners tend to misunderstand the noun **casualty** and the verb **assist** since many participants accept the definitions given ("to be present at" and "injured or killed in an accident," respectively). The data observed also tell us that learners frequently assign the wrong definitions to the nouns **college** and **firm** although,

in general, their knowledge of these words is not so deficient as in the previous cases. Surprisingly, we also witness that a not-so-frequent word like *mayor* is correctly interpreted as a “town leader” by a large part of the participants. Therefore and according to the data obtained, there are obvious cases of semantic transfer affecting English words such as *assist*, *casualty* and *college*. However, transfer is rare in words such as *mayor* and *firm*. The respondents seem to be acquainted with the core meanings of these two last English nouns. This seems to indicate that these two English words activate their corresponding concepts in the L2 and are not accessed through the L1 lexical representation. By contrast, words such as *assist*, *casualty* and even *college* are largely linked to the similar forms in the first language and are processed through it.

#### 4.7.2.2. Interpretation of False Friends in a Linguistic Context

Activities 3 and 4 intend to look into the learners’ understanding of some false friends within a short linguistic context. Word collocations and sentence cues are provided in order to test the learners’ syntagmatic knowledge of ten different false friends.

##### 4.7.2.2.1. Word Collocations

In activity 3, learners are asked about the accuracy of some word combinations which have false friends as heads. The learners’ answers to this activity cast some light on the students’ depth of knowledge of these lexical items. Broadly speaking, the results obtained show that most learners ignore the semantic and syntagmatic features of nouns such as *commodities*, *locals* and the combinatory possibilities of adjectives, such as *blank* and *fine*. Thus, over half of the participants think that bread and meat cannot qualify as *basic commodities*; that someone cannot be said to have a *blank expression* on his/her face and that there exists the possibility of *renting locals* in a British context. On the other hand, the phrases *fine wine* and *accommodate to a friend*, which are perfectly acceptable in English, sound strange to a large proportion of Spanish learners. Most learners definitely know that *summer camp* is admissible in English while *\*appointing with a gun* is quite unusual in English. Finally, there are divergent opinions about the accuracy of collocations such as *\*to realise an investigation* and *a water pipe*. Over a third of the participants has a surface knowledge of these words and mistakenly assumes that the former is correct and the latter is wrong.



#### 4.7.2.2.2. Sentence Cues

In task 4, students are asked to choose between two pairs of words according to the linguistic context given. Learners get especially confused with the sentence in which they have to choose between the adjectives *casual* and *eventual*. The data show that most of the participants consider *eventual workers* as the correct option. In a similar vein, the distinction between *career* and *degree* is not easy for students as they have the tendency to choose *career* when they mean university course. There is also some confusion between the adjectives *sensible* and *sensitive*, some of the students select *sensible* even when the linguistic context clearly requires the adjective *sensitive*. On the contrary, the noun *exit* is not easily confused with “success.” These two concepts stand clearly apart in the learners’ mental lexicons. However, the sentential context in the previous cases may have activated the necessary word in the learners’ mother tongue (e.g. a person who cries very easily is *sensible* in Spanish). Then the L1 word form (Spanish *sensible*) is transferred into English by selecting its orthographic counterpart (*sensible* in English). Consequently, learners disregard any type of semantic divergence between the two interlingual homographs and make the mistake of choosing the wrong option in English.

#### 4.7.2.3. Interpretation of False Friends in a Situational Context

Task 5 presents different types of signs which can be found in everyday British life. Learners are asked to think about the context/place/situation where they can find such signs and translate them into Spanish. This task allows us to determine whether the L1 or the L2 semantic representations are accessed during the reading of these English signs.

##### 4.7.2.3.1. False Friends on English Signs and Notices

The signs in Activity 5 evoke a situational context which might aid students in their understanding of English false friends. Taking the learners’ answers into account, participants make some wrong inferences which are shown, for instance, in the translations provided for *estate agents* and *motorists*. By contrast, the meanings of some words such as *diversion* which might be regarded as difficult seem to be easily

interpreted from their context of occurrence and from other non-textual elements. Thus, the presence of some visual elements, such as the symbol of an arrow, may have facilitated the participants' interpretation of the word **diversion** in its sense of "alternative path." This is clearly shown in the following translation i.e. *Seguir la dirección de la flecha* where **diversion** is translated into Spanish as *flecha* "arrow." In spite of that, the contexts provided on some signs are useless for the correct interpretation of some phrases such as **estate agents** or **police notice**, which are usually mistranslated by Spanish learners. By contrast, the suitable translation of the adjective **large** comes to the learners' minds immediately due to the combination of this adjective with the noun **discounts** which quickly activates the phrase "grandes descuentos" in the participants' mother tongue. In effect, factors such as the clarity of the context and the existence of precise textual and situational clues play a role in the learners' understanding of false friends. Therefore, the evidence provided indicates that a clear and precise context is needed for the correct interpretation of unknown false friends. Learners cannot retrieve the meaning of English **estate** because its combination with **agents** is not a sufficient clue to understand it. However, learners might have deduced the semantic content of this English word if they are shown a sentence such as *She left an estate worth 900,000 pounds*.

#### 4.7.2.4. Interpretation of False Friends as Part of a Given Text

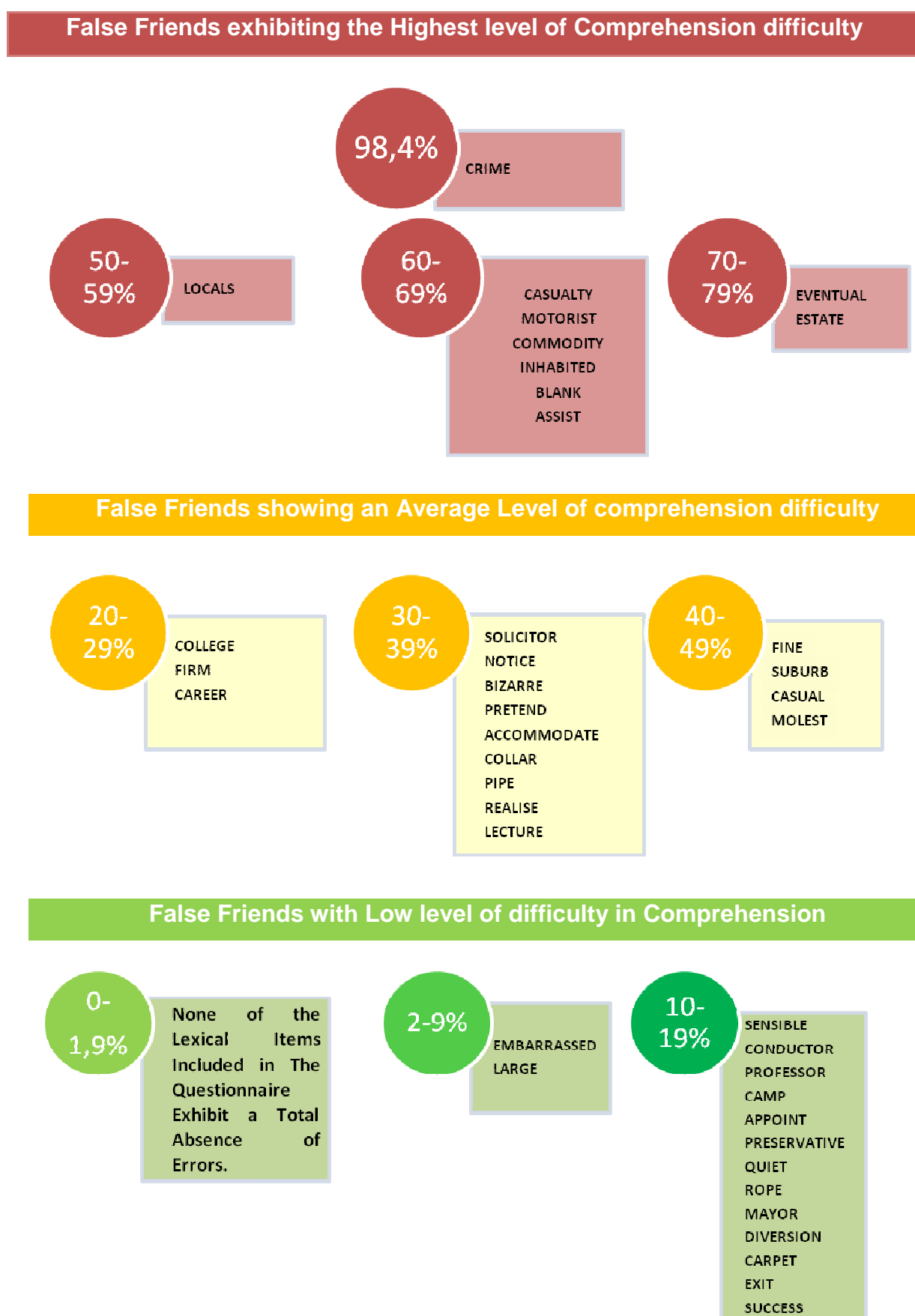
Activity 6 presents false friends as part of a given text. The text adopts the format of a piece of news. The participants' answers to this activity reveal how well learners interpret English false friends in the context of a text unit. The replies to this task somewhat display the effectiveness of the strategies used by Spanish learners whenever they find false friends in English.

##### 4.7.2.4.1. False Friends within a Particular Text

In this activity, we will try to see if the misinterpretation of some false friends might lead participants to change the meaning of a text and misunderstand it completely. Learners are asked to answer a number of questions on a piece of news which deals with a "strange" and "informally-dressed" lawyer who was arrested in his house in a residential area of London after sexually abusing a professor. The participants' answers

to the reading comprehension questions helped us understand the importance of having a good knowledge of English vocabulary. As gathered from the data analysis (pp. 370-378), the miscomprehension of some words led participants to misinterpret who was the protagonist of the story, the action, the context and even the recipient. Although there are some students who interpret the text in the correct way, some others provide different interpretations for this piece of news. Some respondents re-construe the meaning of the text and infer that Harry is a job applicant who lives in the slums and has simply disturbed his victim. In particular, the meanings of *solicitor* and *suburb* do not seem to be easy for students to infer. Thus, the victim's job is misinterpreted on several occasions (learners are not sure if she is a teacher, professor or apprentice); and several participants are hesitant about the location of the protagonist's house (they do not really know if it is located in a residential area or in the slums). Apart from that, the verb *molest* seems to be ignored and misunderstood by many of the respondents. As a result, many subjects disagree with regards to the protagonist's action. Finally, there is also some confusion produced by the noun *bizarre* and by the verb phrase *pretend to be relaxed*. The former is mainly understood as sick, ill, while the latter is sometimes interpreted as if the protagonist was trying to be relaxed instead of feigning it. In sum, this activity reveals that guessing the meaning of false friends from context is not always an effective strategy. Besides, it stresses the significance of learning a large amount of vocabulary items.

After examining the learners' understanding of each of the 40 false friends in this survey and the results according to the activity type, a detailed organisation of these false friends into levels of difficulty (high, average and low difficulty) is provided. Figure 47 (next page) arranges false friends into different levels of comprehension difficulty according to the data obtained in the analysis of the questionnaires. This arrangement of false friends aims at warning language teachers about those false friends which seem to show a high degree of difficulty for students in terms of their comprehension. The group of false friends which seem to be most problematic (in red) should have a special pedagogical treatment in the English class. Undoubtedly, the teaching of these problematic words would help learners in their interpretation of written and oral texts containing these lexical items.



**FIGURE 47:** Assembly of FF according to their difficulty in Comprehension Tasks

## 4.8. General Summary and Conclusions

### 4.8.1. General Summary: Study II

As aforementioned, this second survey comes to complement the corpus-based study carried out initially in the first study; thus, the items chosen for the analysis in the questionnaire have been basically selected taking into account the data gathered in the exploration of the students' productive use of English.<sup>86</sup> Three main criteria have determined the inclusion of false friends in this second study: their degree of difficulty in the learners' production (e.g. *locals*, *molest*, *commodities*, *casual* or *career*), their complete lack of difficulty in production (e.g. *rope*, *carpet* or *blank*) and their non-occurrence in the corpora scrutinised (e.g. *collar*, *conductor*, *diversion*, *motorist*, *preservative*, and *solicitor*). This second study was carried out thanks to a number of students who volunteered to fill in a questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to look into the learners' identification, knowledge, interpretation and understanding of English false friends; it also intended to show the learners' conscious awareness of the phenomenon of false friends, the pedagogical techniques used by teachers in the classroom and the learning difficulties which may arise from the existence of these lexical items. The false friends (40 words) as well as the questions included in the survey (6 tasks and 7 direct questions) had been carefully reflected upon in order to collect all the relevant information on the interpretation of these words and avoid the participants' tediousness during the completion of the questionnaire. The data provided by the learners' responses to this survey would help us identify those false friends that tend to be misinterpreted by learners and those that need to be discussed and taught in an EFL context.

After discussing the nature of this second study, its aims, the research instrument used and the main findings, the outcomes of the qualitative and quantitative analysis lead us to reach some general conclusions.

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<sup>86</sup> For technical reasons, it would be almost impossible to include the whole set of 100 false friends analysed in production for their study in comprehension. The need to restrict the amount of false friends to a manageable number led me to make a selection of items based on the data obtained in the first study.

#### 4.8.2. General Conclusions: Study II

This section is intended to provide a plausible reply to each of the research questions posed at the beginning of this second study. The data obtained from the analysis of the questionnaires enable us to determine the learners' receptive knowledge of English false friends and the difficulties triggered off by false friends in EFL learning.

Regarding the first question,

- Are students able to identify and interpret false friends correctly when they come across them in reception? How well do students interpret these words? Are they influenced by an L1 similar concept? What type of false friends are the most problematic in terms of their interpretation?

The data gathered from the analysis of the questionnaires show that Spanish learners do not always interpret false friends in the correct way. There are certain words which are clearly interpreted on the basis of the learners' first language (e.g. *assist*, *crime* and *estate*) and which give way to misinterpretations of the L2 vocabulary. The students' lack of knowledge (e.g. *crime*, *eventual*) and the deceptive nature of false friends (e.g. *inhabited*, *motorist*) may well explain why Spanish learners have some problems in the interpretation of a number of false friends. On most occasions, the learners' deficient or partial knowledge of these lexical items drives students to draw an association with the L1 which leads them to interpret these words in an incorrect way (cognate-pairing mechanism).

Evidence also shows that not all items are equally problematic in terms of their interpretation. In fact, some words seem to be easily accessible for learners, that is, they are not such a big obstacle for a correct understanding of certain English messages while others are quite challenging. Thus, data reveal that a verb, such as *assist*; nouns, such as *casualty*, *commodity*, *crime* and *motorist*; and adjectives, such as *blank*, *eventual* or *inhabited* are highly likely to be misapprehended by Spanish learners of English. However, lemmas, such as *carpet*, *diversion*, *embarrassed*, *exit*, *large* or *mayor* are easily decoded and tend to be perfectly understood by Spanish students of English. The most striking feature of these results is that a verb such as *assist* which is recurrently seen in English and frequently discussed in the classroom is ascribed the wrong definition (confusion with the verb *attend*) and we have also seen that students show a correct understanding of the English noun *mayor* which is not so commonly

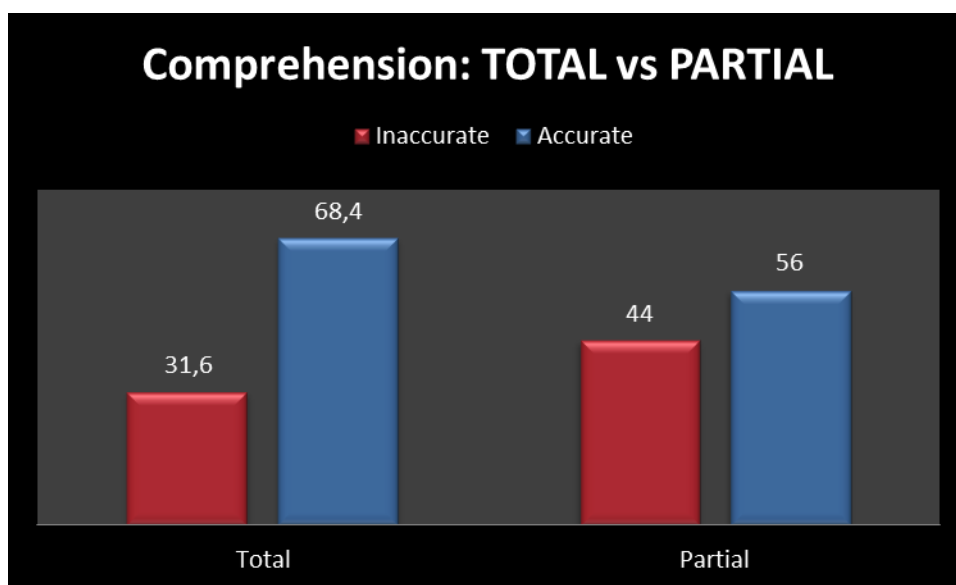
studied in EFL settings. In the case of *assist*, the learners' mother tongue might be exerting a clear influence on the interpretation of the L2 word; in the case of *mayor*, participants make the correct decision when they tick the definition provided. This shows that students have not acquired the meaning and use of the English verb *assist* correctly. Besides, the formal similarities between this word and the verb *asistir* in the learners' mother tongue might have added difficulty to the interpretation of this word. The meaning of the Spanish homograph was activated and learners apply the L1 concept to the word in the L2 thus leading participants to misinterpret the English verb. In contrast to this, the definition provided for the noun *mayor* seems to have activated the learners' passive knowledge of this English noun and helped them make the right choice and remember the English sense of this noun.

As regards the participants' overall interpretation of English false friends, the percentage of accuracy in the interpretation of false friends is higher than the percentage representing an inaccurate comprehension of these words. As shown in figure 46 (pp. 399), there is a predominance of favourable results (65 per cent) over wrong responses (35 per cent). Nevertheless, over one third of the results show an imperfect identification and understanding of English false friends. Therefore, there are some traces of the L1 influence in the interpretation of certain lexical items. This means that there are some particular false friends that are not appropriately identified and are processed through the learners' first language, thus yielding to misunderstandings and potential misproductions.

It is not possible to draw categorical conclusions as to why some lexical items are more complex to interpret than others. The class of false friend, its frequency of occurrence and the part of speech to which it belongs do not appear to be major contributing factors to the correct interpretation of false friends. Partial (*crime*) and total false friends (*estate*), high-frequency (*eventually*) and lower-frequency (*inhabited*, *casualty*) items, and nouns (*motorist*, *commodity*), verbs (*assist*) and adjectives (*blank*) are all represented in the group of difficult-to-interpret lexical items.

With regard to the false friends exhibiting few misunderstandings, there are both high-frequency (*quiet*) and low-frequency (*diversion*, *mayor*) items which show some but few interpretation problems. However, as regards the category to which the false friends under examination belong, the largest proportion of mistaken interpretations was found in partial *faux amis* (44 per cent) followed by the total ones (31.6 per cent). The absence of contextual false friends in this second part (e.g. *various* and *adequate*) due to

practical reasons does not allow us to compare these findings with the results concerning the interpretation of contextual false friends.



**FIGURE 48:** Degree of Inaccuracy in Total and Partial FF in Comprehension

This figure illustrates the overall proportion of erroneous interpretations and correct understandings across the two basic categories of false friends. These results suggest that total false friends are identified more easily by students. This is a positive result since misunderstanding total false friends may lead to more serious communication problems (we can just think how utterances such as *I have never seen these locals that you are talking about, I do not like preservatives, they are solicitors* might be interpreted by Spanish learners who are not acquainted with total false friends such as *locals*, *preservatives* or *solicitors*. This finding also confirms the arguments contended by scholars such as Odlin (1989) or Frantzen (2008) who argued that *partial* false friends are more misleading since they are highly polysemic words (they have some shared meaning with the L1 and some different meanings students have to learn). However, as already pointed out, certain false friends belonging to different categories show similar numbers of correct and incorrect interpretations. Therefore, it is not only the type of false friend (total, partial or contextual) which accounts for the interpretative complexity of some false friends over the others.

Another question which is of interest to this study is to determine whether students tend to avoid responding to some questions. The missing values in Study II might give us an indication of the learners' level of risk-taking and their level of uncertainty about the meaning of some lexical items. A high level of response could indicate that learners are sure about the meanings of these words. We have seen that



although there are some particular cases in which learners leave some questions unanswered (especially in the case of Task 5 and the phrase *estate* agents), the strategy of avoidance is not massively perceived in this study. Therefore, this may suggest that students do not mind taking risks, guessing the meaning of some of these apparently transparent words and showing their interpretation of these lexical items. In fact, some participants appear to respond to some questions even when they are not entirely acquainted with the senses of some English false friends. Thus a general overview of the overall results (Figure 46) indicates that learners take risks in 35 percent of the cases since this is the percentage of answers which illustrate the learners' erroneous understanding of false friends. What we cannot tell from the learners' replies is if the errors are the result of the learners' attitude to take risks consciously in order to avoid leaving the questions unanswered or if these mistakes are the outcome of the wrong acquisition of these English words. The next research question tries to shed some more light on the possible reasons which lead Spanish learners of English to misinterpret English false friends.

- What are the reasons for the misinterpretation of these lexical items? How could we avoid the problems with false friends?

The learners' lack of knowledge and the reliance on their mother tongue during the interpretation of false friends appear to be the main reasons accounting for the misunderstanding of English false friends. The misleading nature of these terms also contributes to processing these words through their L1 and to making associations between similar items in the mother tongue and in the second language. These associations appear to be powerful and difficult to overcome in the case of *assist* or *commodity*. Factors such as the frequency of these items in the L1 may also have an impact on the understanding of these words in the L2. The corresponding Spanish homographs *asistir* and *comodidad* may be highly active during the interpretation of these words due to their high frequency in the L1. According to Davies (2006), *assist* is among the 1000 most frequently used words in Spanish and *comodidad* is in position 2296, both words are more common in the L1 than in English (*assist* is among the 3000 and *commodity* is among the 4000 most frequently used words). It has been shown that high frequency items in the L1 increase their likelihood of influencing the learners' perception and use of the L2 (Larsen-Freeman, 1976; Murphy, 2003). The learners' dependence on their mother tongue and the influence of their first language appear to be so strong as to influence the interpretation of words which are placed in a sentence

context (Van Hell and De Groot, 2008) or in a specific context of occurrence (e.g. on a road sign, on a food package, etc). In this regard, some scholars have shown that getting rid of the L1 seems to be rather difficult for a language learner since similar forms subconsciously evoke similar mental images (Dijkstra et al, 1998). This somewhat suggests that most of the times, learners might not be aware of the fact that they are misinterpreting these lexical items. Therefore, explicit instruction accompanied by repeated exposure to these lexical items would probably constitute a successful solution to this problem. Moreover, the interpretation of these words (e.g. *blank*, *collar*, *conductor* or *diversion*) should be supervised by teachers in order to avoid fossilisation of wrong assumptions in the L2 vocabulary (Hall, 2002). Teachers should make use of explicit teaching techniques to tackle these words in the classroom (see Appendix 2, pp. 465-476 for some suggested activities) and learners should make an effort to inhibit the influence of their mother tongue, suppress any links with the previous linguistic system and reconceptualise the L2 form according to the L2 meaning. The correct acquisition of these words would improve the learners' level of competence and their vocabulary knowledge.

- Do students identify false friends when they find them as individual words (*collar*, *lecture*) in a decontextualised setting?

As for the learners' identification of false friends in decontextualised situations, the results show that some English false friends are clearly processed through the L1 similar item (e.g. *crime*) and are associated with the wrong visuals in the proposed picture recognition task. Words such as *crime*, *inhabited*, *collar*, *lecture* and *conductor* are frequently matched up with the pictures representing a murder, a ruined house, a necklace, a boy reading and a dog driving, respectively. These words also have a high amount of missing values which indicates that learners are indecisive about the referents corresponding to these lexical items. On the contrary, the English adjectives *embarrassed*, *quiet* and the noun *rope* are correctly understood by the participants, who connect these words with the corresponding pictures, that is, with the ashamed monkey, the silence sign and the string (see Appendix 1, pp. 458). On this occasion, learners interpret these words correctly and the number of missing values is not as high as with the previous lexical items. This indicates that the impact of the L1 on the interpretation of decontextualised false friends is not consistent and may vary considerably from one item to another. Some theories about the organisation of the L2 mental lexicon might give us some clues concerning these differences across false friends. Some researchers

on bilingual processing maintain that “the recognition of an interlingual homograph by a bilingual involves the parallel activation of the two readings of the homograph” (Kerkhofs *et. al*, 2006: 170); this means that when Spanish learners find the word *collar* in an English text, the semantic representations of English *collar* “T-shirt neckline” and of Spanish *collar* “necklace” are activated. A successful receiver would be able to disregard the Spanish concept and adopt solely the English notion. However, overcoming interlingual influences is not an easy task. The connections between words in the L2 mental lexicon are primarily form-driven (Meara, 1984; Laufer, 1989; Comesaña *et al.*, 2010); consequently, there are semantic representations of the L1 which are transferred and applied to the L2. These crosslanguage activations and the semantic processing through the L1 are not safe and lead to the misinterpretation of L2 false friends. Thus, *crime*, *inhabited*, *collar*, *lecture* and *conductor* are wrongly understood as exclusively referring to “murder,” “uninhabited,” “necklace,” “reading” and “driver,” respectively. However, the activation of the corresponding orthographically similar words in the L1 (*embarazada*, *quieto*, *ropa*) to English *embarrassed*, *quiet* and *rope* is not so powerful as to suppress the L2 semantic representations in the learners’ minds. This might be connected with the learners’ command of English and with the idea that “the activation of semantic representations depends on word frequency” (Conklin, 2005: 27), that is, the L2 semantic representations are more easily accessed if we are dealing with high frequency L2 words. The English words *embarrassed*, *quiet* and *rope* are within the group of the 3000 most frequent words and their corresponding lookalikes are not so common in the learners’ mother tongue (*embarazada* and *quieto* are within the top 4000 most frequent words in Spanish)<sup>87</sup> except for Spanish *ropa* which is more frequent in Spanish (position 1285) than in English (s3, w3). The percentage of correctness achieved in the noun *rope* is somewhat surprising but could be explained as a result of a “discarding strategy.” It is likely that participants know that *rope* cannot refer to the picture of the hanging clothes since the English word for a set of garments is *clothes*, so they rule out the picture of the outfits and choose the other picture which is precisely the right one. In this regard, word frequency might occasionally explain why the L2 meaning prevails over the meaning of the L1 similar words in the case of *embarrassed* and *quiet*. Besides, these two words are widely used in EFL contexts.

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<sup>87</sup> Figures based on Davies, Mark. 2006. *A Frequency Dictionary of Spanish: Core Vocabulary for Learners*. New York: Routledge.

- Do students ascribe the correct definition to English false friends (e.g. *assist*, *college*)? How well are students acquainted with the semantic properties (meanings), paradigmatic and syntagmatic features (collocations) of certain false friends (e.g. *accommodate a friend*, *fine wine*)? Do they know particular word combinations and collocations of these English words?

Activities 2 and 3 of the questionnaire look into the learners' knowledge of the semantic, paradigmatic and syntagmatic features of English false friends. As regards the learners' semantic knowledge, the results in activity 2 reveal that the subjects investigated know what *mayor*, *firm* and even *college* (the last one to a lesser extent) mean; they also show that learners are not familiar with the core meanings of some English false friends, such as the noun *casualty* and the verb *assist* since over 60 percent of the participants assign the wrong meaning to these last words. With regard to the learners' semantic and syntactic knowledge of false friends, the data in activity 3 show that most learners ignore the meaning and collocations of a series of nouns, such as *commodities* and *locals*. Learners' intuitions about the words accompanying these lexical items are totally incorrect. They fall into the trap of admitting that a collocation such as *\*locals to rent* is correct when it is in fact a real calque from Spanish. Participants are not really familiar with the syntagmatic properties of adjectives such as *blank* and *fine* either. The phrases *fine wine* and *accommodate a friend*, which are perfectly acceptable in English, are considered inaccurate by a large proportion of Spanish learners. By contrast, participants are aware of the fact that the phrase *\*appoint with a gun* is not correct in English; and most learners definitely know that *summer camp* is admissible in English. In addition, the collocations *to \*realise an investigation* and *water pipe* cause some controversy. Over a third of the participants maintain that *\*to realise an investigation* is correct and *a water pipe* is wrong.

The learners' responses to these two activities show that not all false friends are at the same level of acquisition. From a psycholinguistic perspective, it is possible to distinguish three levels in L2 vocabulary acquisition (Jiang, 2000: 47). Firstly, a form is established as a L2 lexical entry; then, at a second stage, the L2 entry is shaped by a combination of the L2 form and the semantic and syntactic information of its L1 translation; and at a third stage, the L2 concepts are linked to the L2 formal specifications. This last stage is perceived in a scarce number of words (perhaps in the words *camp* and *appoint*). The first and the second stage are the most apparent ones. There are clues in the learners' responses which show that the L2 entries for *notice*,

*realise* and *pipe* have been suitably established in the learners' mental lexicon, although there is still some influence of the syntagmatic properties of the L1 (Stage II) on these words. In the case of *commodity*, *blank*, *locals* and *fine*, learners are uniquely acquainted (if something) with the L2 forms, their semantic representations are taken over by the knowledge of the L1 (Stage I).

Strictly speaking, the results in task 2 which assesses the learners' semantic knowledge of the words (first and part of the second vocabulary acquisition stage), show that except for the word *mayor*, the learners' knowledge of English false friends (*firm*, *college*, *assist* and *casualty*) is still at stage I. Students know the form but they process it through the L1 and apply the meaning of the L1 translation equivalent to the L2 form.

- Do students choose the right word in a clear linguistic co-text and context when they are confronted with a pair of false friends (e.g. *Her last book was a big... success/exit*) in a clearly-defined context? Are *sensible* or *exit*, for instance, connected with contexts conjuring up tears and achievement?

Four pairs of well-known false friends (*sensible-sensitive*, *career-degree*, *exit-success*, *casual-eventual*) are presented in a representative linguistic context in activity 4. The students' pragmatic and conceptual discrimination of a pair of adjectives such as *casual/eventual* and a pair of nouns, such as university *career/degree* turn out to be challenging for Spanish learners. The remaining pairs of false friends are less problematic. A low number of difficulties were found in the following English pairs: *sensible-sensitive* and *exit-success*. There are few cases where the participants select the wrong word. The co-text as well as their practical knowledge of English *sensible* and *exit* might have had an impact on the learners' choices in these sentences. With regard to this, research on bilingual language processing suggests that there is a nonselective lexical access when they read a word in any of their languages (Grosjean, 2002; Dijkstra, 2002; Kroll and Dussias, 2004; Costa, 2005); both the L1 and the L2 are active and there may be factors constraining and giving priority to one of the two readings. Sentential context and the frequency of the L1 word (Conklin, 2005) seem to determine the final decision. However, the linguistic co-text provided in task 4 for the words *casual* and *eventual* did not help students make the right decision; the L1 meaning is activated when reading these two pairs of English words and the high frequency of Spanish phrases such as *carrera universitaria* and *trabajador eventual/temporal* may have an influence on the choice of *career* and *eventual* instead of the most appropriate terms in the L2, which

would be *degree* and *casual*. The problems in this activity show the effects of crosslinguistic interactions which are not effectively saved by students.

- Does a situational context (e.g. road signs, product labels, advertisements) help students guess and comprehend the sense of certain false friends in particular situations (e.g. *diversion*, *preservatives*, *motorist*)?

The answer to this question is mainly found in activity 5 where learners are presented with several false friends on real signs which evoke clearly identifiable situations (this task involves familiarity with messages on road signs and on food packages). Supposedly, evoking the context where these English messages occur should aid students in the understanding of the false friends used on these signs (although learners have never found these words before in their classes). In order to assess the usefulness of the context in the interpretation of English false friends, participants are asked to show their understanding of the messages through a translation. The translation proposals provided by students reveal that learners are able to access the meaning of the L2 thanks to the context of situation conjured up in some of the notices. In addition to this, some other extralinguistic features such as arrows or the fonts used (see *diversion* and *large*) on the signs seem to help students interpret the corresponding messages. In this respect, it is necessary to point out that the learners' strategy to guess the meaning from the context seems to be effective in some cases (i.e. *diversion* and *large*) but it appears to be not so helpful for the interpretation of *motorist* or *estate agents*, where the effect of the mother tongue on the learners' reading of these words is stronger than the influence of the context where the words occur. In this case, the limited input received in relation to these two lexical items in the classroom together with the scarcity of encounters with these two words might account for the misreadings observed. The fact that *motorist* and *estate agents* can be used in similar contexts in English and Spanish may have also confused readers and may not have helped participants deduce the correct meaning of these English words.

The next research question discusses the role of context in the interpretation of English false friends more in depth while analysing the learners' identification and understanding of false friends within a particular text.

- Are false friends easier to interpret when they are embedded in the context of a text?  
Do texts lead to a better understanding of English false friends? Might the presence of several false friends hinder the interpretation of a whole text?

After considering the reading comprehension activity in task 6, it is possible to assert that the students' lack of knowledge about certain false friends may bring about serious misunderstandings and might even change the meaning of a piece of news completely. As shown in the learners' replies to activity 6, the participants' understanding of the piece of news is different for different learners. Some participants, especially those with a high level of English, tend to interpret the text correctly. They understand that the protagonist is a lawyer who sexually abused a professor. However, some readers think that Harry is a driver who argues with or abuses his victim. There is some confusion about the victim's job (teacher, professor or apprentice), the lawyer's action (e.g. disturbance, sexual abuse or argument) and the location of the lawyer's house (residential area or slums) in the text brought about by the learners' lack of knowledge and their confidence in the L1. According to the figures obtained, learners' are doubtful about the words *molest* and *suburb*. Half of the participants cannot retrieve the correct meaning of these words from the context and we see how the misinterpretation of these words clearly distorts the meaning of the text. In terms of L2 comprehension, participants tend to assume that false friends are known to them and assign them a wrong meaning (the formal similarity with L1 items makes students believe that these English words should have the same meaning as their L1 homographs). Consequently, the immediate context of these words is distorted and this distorted context sometimes serves as a clue for guessing other unknown words in the text. This may lead to more serious mistakes and strange semantic adaptations which may result in the misinterpretation of a full text (Laufer, 1989:16). In other words, by association and transfer mechanisms L2 learners may identify cognates when they are not (e.g. *solicitor*, *professor*, *molest* or *suburb*) thus misinterpreting the real meaning of a whole English text (Escribano, 2004:104)

In sum, this survey reveals that it is important to be acquainted with English false friends for a perfect understanding of the English language. However, the questionnaire also intends to look into the learners' view on the significance of false friends in language learning. Among other things, this survey seeks to find out about the learners' familiarity with these words and the students' preoccupations about the use of these lexical items in English. The findings concerning these issues are summarised below.

- Are learners acquainted with the linguistic term “false friends”?

Regarding the students’ awareness of false friends, most participants seem to be familiar with the term “false friend” and know what this metaphor stands for.

- Are learners concerned about these lexical items and motivated to learn them?

Participants in this survey consider false friends as a non-casual problem due to the existence of numerous tricky words between English and Spanish. Some learners point to the fact that false friends constitute an interesting language phenomenon whose knowledge could help students have a better command of the foreign language.

- What are the students’ thoughts on the importance of false friends?

As regards the importance given to this crosslinguistic phenomenon, most participants maintain that false friends are important in EFL settings since they may lead to misunderstandings and serious mistakes in the L2. Furthermore, they maintain that these words should be better represented in textbooks (almost half of the participants in this study contend that their textbooks do not include any section on false friends) since teachers do not pay attention to these lexical items when they are not included in the coursebooks required.

- What are the techniques both English teachers and learners use to study false friends in an EFL context?

Part II of the questionnaire also looks into the techniques used by teachers for the presentation of this phenomenon in the classroom and the strategies used by learners to deal with these lexical items.

According to the participants’ responses, their *teachers* often benefit from definitions and illustrative examples to introduce false friends in the classroom. In addition to this, textbooks and vocabulary lists are also used as important reference points by teachers in the classroom (although to a lesser extent).

As regards the learners’ strategies and approach to the study of English false friends, the participants maintain that they frequently look for clear-cut examples of false friends which help them understand the meaning and use of these words in English. Furthermore, students contend that they frequently pay attention to the use of these words in texts and in conversations; and they also point out that they spend some time thinking about contexts or situations where they would need to use these words. In the same vein, language learners consider dictionaries as useful tools.



Broadly speaking, the data suggest that the strategies that learners use are, on the whole, quite similar to those that teachers resort to in order to deal with these words. As a matter of fact, both teachers and learners prefer to make use of illustrative examples, and present these lexical items in unambiguous contexts and clear situations so that it is easier for teachers to teach these words and for students to learn these lexical items. Regarding the differences between the teachers' techniques and the learners' strategies, teachers sometimes appear to provide students with lists of false friends and some learners think that vocabulary lists are not really useful study aids to obtain a suitable knowledge of these words.

– What problems do students acknowledge having with these lexical items?

As regards the problems learners admit having in their production and reception of English as a result of the influence of false friends, most participants claim that they tend to resort to the L1 as a point of reference for the interpretation of those words in the L2 that they ignore. They also acknowledge that false friends, as is the case of other unknown words, hinder L2 comprehension and maintain that the context of situation/occurrence does not always lead to a correct understanding of these words. As a result, false friends may produce problems in the interpretation of whole situations. With regard to L2 production and the conscious use of false friends, participants maintain that they are concerned about making mistakes and few subjects say that they take risks and use false friends as a communication strategy in order to fill in a gap of knowledge in their vocabulary. In this respect, participants in this survey do not think that their mother tongue affects their use of English negatively.

## CHAPTER 5.

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS FROM BOTH STUDIES: CORPUS-BASED AND SURVEY-BASED RESEARCH

This chapter aims to summarise the main points and contents of the studies discussed in this dissertation. In order to avoid the repetition of issues raised in the previous chapters, I will mainly concentrate on the findings and conclusions considered to be most relevant. For a detailed account of the contents and conclusions of Study I and Study II, see *sections 3.8. and 4.8.* (pp. 297-307, 406-418).

#### **5.1. Overview of Chapters**

This dissertation has been conceived to explore the learners' use and understanding of a set of high-frequency English false friends. Three different learner corpora and a questionnaire were used for the study of false friends in L2 production (Study I) and for the analysis of the learners' understanding of English false friends (Study II).

Generally speaking, this work is composed of two clearly distinct parts. The first part, with a clear theoretical nature, aims at giving some background knowledge about the false friendship phenomenon. It consists of an introduction and two more chapters. The introductory chapter contains some brief notes on the origin of false friends, on the intricacies of these words and on the relationship between false friends and both the lexical and the communicative competence. After that, the scope and the aims of this dissertation are presented.

Following these introductory remarks, the first chapter starts by reviewing the various terms proposed in the literature, the basic distinction between the notions of *false friends* and *false cognates*, and the reasons explaining my preference for the former. An operational definition of *false friends* is next provided, together with a first general overview of the different taxonomies and my own proposal of classification which goes further well-known traditional categorisations. This first chapter ends by showing that false friends are not specific to particular languages such as English and Spanish; they may also occur in many language pairs and even across varieties of the same language (British English-American English; European Spanish-American

Spanish). Chapter 2 is concerned with the literature review and the importance of false friends in different areas of language research, such as translation, cognitive research, language teaching and lexicography. This second chapter includes a final section which examines the impact of false friends on L2 production and L2 reception processes. These chapters provide the theoretical background of the dissertation which takes shape in the next two chapters. Chapters 3 and 4 constitute the core section of this dissertation. The corpus-based study and the survey-based research are presented here. Both chapters are divided into different parts which explain the motivation for these studies, the main aims, the participants in the studies, the methodology used, the data analyses applied and the main findings and conclusions obtained. After that, there is a last chapter (the current one) which presents the general conclusions from both studies whose ultimate goal is to summarise the main findings and to shed some light on the main difficulties students have with these items in the production and reception of English with a view to preventing and giving a solution to this type of vocabulary problems in learner language.

## **5.2. Summary of Both Studies**

As mentioned earlier, it was necessary to make a number of methodological decisions previous to the elaboration of the studies presented in this dissertation. To begin with, it was important to determine what false friends should be scrutinised, what type of data would be needed, and what type of analysis would be the most suitable for the study. In the end, the decision was to include *high-frequency* English words (listed in renowned frequency word lists, such as the *Longman Communication 3000 Word List* and Kilgarriff's word list) likely to be encountered and used in real communication situations (Leech, 2001). The focus was on learner language and the analysis was two-fold. The selected items were analysed from two different perspectives in two different studies: Study I (chapter 3) draws attention to the occurrence and the use of false friends in learner language through an analysis of the students' written and spoken productions represented in three comparable learner corpora (ICLE, LINDSEI and SULEC). Study II (chapter 4) examines the learners' recognition and understanding of English false friends through a task-based questionnaire specifically designed to look into the learners' detection and interpretation of false friends in different contexts. Accordingly,

this work provides two different but at the same time complementary points of view. The main lines of action of these two studies are summarised below.

In the first study of this dissertation, the students' productive use of English was examined with the aim of systematising the learners' main problems with English false friends (interference in word form and conceptual semantic transfer) in L2 production. This study also aimed at determining what false friends are the easiest and the most difficult ones for Spanish learners in their use of English. On the whole, the learners' knowledge of English false friends and the intralinguistic and extralinguistic factors influencing the acquisition of false friends were closely examined.

The second survey was intended to explore the learners' understanding and interpretation of English false friends in different contexts. This study was also devised to examine the students' ability to interpret the meaning of unknown false friends in a linguistic context, in a situational environment or in the context of a text. Furthermore, the analysis of the answers provided by the participants put on display those false friends which cause most problems in L2 comprehension as well as the students' knowledge and views on the importance of the teaching of false friends in the English classroom.

### 5.3. Major Findings and Conclusions of Both Studies

This section provides a summary of the main findings from both studies with a view to identifying the most notable patterns of difficulty affecting false friends in both L2 production and L2 reception. The conclusions drawn from the two surveys are relevant to both English teachers and learners of English.

It is obvious from the data obtained in both studies that Spanish students have difficulties with particular English false friends. As a matter of fact, some lexical items were found to hinder the learners' performance and comprehension of English. With respect to the learners' performance and their use of English, the data obtained indicate that Spanish learners sometimes use certain English false friends in inappropriate contexts where they do not make sense. Examples 86 or 180 illustrate this: *Smokers must be more **comprehensive** or the persons that smoke in \*this places **molest** to the rest of the persons.* In these sentences, learners are clearly misusing the English adjective **comprehensive** and the verb **molest**. These mistakes are quite serious and may even result in ineffective communication. As regards L2 comprehension, Spanish

learners tend to misinterpret some English false friends and process them through their first language. Thus, the answers to the questionnaire reveal that many of the participants interpret the English verb *assist* in the sense of “to go to a place.” Likewise, the noun *crime* is exclusively connected with the act of “murdering someone,” thus, disregarding the broad sense of this English word (*crime* in English is a cover term for a wide variety of illegal acts). These findings definitely hint at the need for the teachers’ action as well as for the learners’ effort to master these words since this type of lexical blunders somewhat reveal the learners’ poor command of the English language.

The results of both studies also show that not all the 100 false friends under examination are equally problematic for learners. Thus, words such as *success*, *carpet* or *rope* are not as challenging for learners to interpret and use as nouns, such as *commodity* or *locals*. If we compare the results for each of the items analysed, there are some coincidences in the level of difficulty (high/average/low) observed in productive and receptive processes. In fact, there are some false friends which proved to be especially difficult for learners in both production and reception. (1) *Commodity*, *locals*, *inhabited* and *assist* seem to be highly difficult words for Spanish learners to recognise, understand, retrieve and use. The random encounters with these English words (*commodity* or *inhabited* are not so frequent in English), together with the high activation of their L1 counterparts (*asistir* and *locales* are useful and recurrent everyday words in Spanish) may well justify the learners’ problems with these false friends. (2) A word of average difficulty for Spanish learners is the verb *pretend* which displays over a thirty per cent error rate in both production and reception. The conspicuous formal overlap between English *pretend* and Spanish *pretender* as well as the frequency of use of *pretender* in the learners’ mother tongue may have led some students to use and interpret this verb in the Spanish way. It is important to note that the learners’ mother tongue tends to be active all the time since English is being learned as a Foreign Language in a country where English is not the official language. (3) Finally, among low difficulty false friends, there are nouns such as *camp*, *carpet*, *diversion*, *embarrassed*, *rope* or *success* which do not produce a large number of mistakes in the learners’ productive and receptive use of English. The learners’ constant exposure and use of a word such as *embarrassed* in the English class, the students’ participation and acquaintance with the culture of *summer camps*, the teachers’ wearisome insistence on the suitable use of *carpet* and *success* at low levels of competence, the learners’ knowledge that *ropa* is clothes and that *campo* is countryside in English and the

contextual clues provided by the sign where the word *diversion* occurs may probably account for the lack of errors in the understanding and use of these words.

Irrespective of these coincidences in the learners' receptive and productive use of English false friends, most of the items examined exhibit different levels of difficulty in both studies and in both processes. The data collected reveal that there are false friends which are more problematic in terms of their interpretation (e.g. *college*, *crime* or *fine*) than in terms of their production. By contrast, there are some words which show a greater proportion of errors in the productive use of English (e.g. the nouns *career*, *pipe* and *professor*, or the adjectives *quiet*, *sensible* and *large*) than in the learners' passive knowledge of English. Thus, learners have a quite good understanding of words such as *large*, *pipe* or *sensible*; however, the learners' active knowledge of these words is quite limited.

Another observation that deserves our attention is that both studies have shown that students have a rather shallow knowledge of these tricky words. In fact, some learners who are familiar with the meaning of certain false friends only possess a partial knowledge of these vocabulary items. Thus, many learners who identify and know the core meaning of some false friends have been shown to have a limited knowledge of the typical lexical environment which accompanies the word in question. Thus, most learners know what *embarrassed* means and they use in the correct sense; however, for example, sentence 113 shows the selection of an incorrect preposition: *That isn't right that these xx people feel embarrassed by their sexual condition* ("about" would be a more suitable option). Moreover, some spelling errors affecting false friends have been found as in the case of the verb *realise* which is misspelled in the following example, e.g. *In fact, as a non-smoker I have realiced that new law is working yet*. On the other hand, the answers to the questionnaire have shown that learners' ignore the combinatorial properties of some false friends (e.g. *fine wine*) and the semantic complexity of certain words (*crime*). These two issues (the word's combinations and the semantic features of these words) should be considered and dealt with in EFL settings.

In general terms, a global overview of the results for the 100 false friends altogether show that the percentage of false friends which are used and interpreted with accuracy is higher than the percentage of FF which students misuse or misinterpret. Still, there are mistakes in twenty-two per cent of the instances containing false friends in the corpora (see figure 13, pp. 282, for results regarding production) and there are

comprehension problems affecting thirty-five per cent of the false friends examined in the questionnaire (and figure 46, pp. 399, for percentages in reception).

It might appear rather surprising that the percentage of inaccuracy is higher in comprehension tasks than in production activities. The nature of the lexical items included in the questionnaire may have a bearing on this. Words such as *solicitor*, *preservative*, *diversion* or *casualty* which occur in receptive tasks are not so commonly found and taught in EFL classes as other words which are present in productive tasks (e.g. *topic*, *parents* or *realise*). In addition to this, the fact that students can control the language they produce while they are not in control of the language they receive may also explain the lower number of errors in L2 performance than in L2 comprehension. It is true that students can shape the language they produce but they do not have the same control over comprehension. For this reason, in reading comprehension tasks, learners may sometimes need to interpret certain content words which are unknown to them in which case learners tend to resort to a number of different strategies which may or may not work. This study shows that whenever learners come across a false friend that they do not know in English they tend to find support in their mother tongue in order to interpret it and this leads them to serious misunderstandings and to the misinterpretation of whole messages. Therefore, the recognition of false friends in receptive tasks also becomes essential for a full understanding of the English language and for a correct acquisition and later use of these vocabulary items.

Another interesting result is that the error percentage was found to be higher in the written (ICLE and SULEC) than in the spoken performance of Spanish learners (LINDSEI and SULEC); this was contrary to our initial assumptions since we would expect to find a lower proportion of mistakes in written than in spoken language due to the nature of written language (by definition, the written mode is more carefully planned and organised). This outcome shows how important the students' level of English is. In effect, the fact that the written component of SULEC contains essays produced by intermediate students of English has contributed to a significant rise in the percentage of errors attested in written language. This has given way to an increase in the global average of mistakes found in the learners' written productions which goes beyond the percentage of mistakes found in the spoken performance of learners. That may well explain why the learners' written language displays a higher percentage of difficulties with false friends than the students' spoken performance. On the one hand, this finding comes to support the idea that lower level students tend to have more problems with

false friends than advanced students; and on the other hand, this outcome is in line with the observations made by scholars such as Laufer (1990), Mattheoudakis (1998), Dijkstra et al. (1998) or Fischer and Lavric (2003) who argue that lexical errors of the false friend type persist at advanced levels of competence. Therefore, this should have important pedagogical implications.

The data in both studies also reveal that the type of false friend (whether it is total, partial or contextual) has an impact on the identification and use of these words. Thus the data show that total (or almost total) false friends (e.g. *career*, *large*, *locals*) are more problematic in production while partial false friends are more difficult to process in L2 comprehension (e.g. *crime*, *fine*, *pretend*). In the learners' productive use of English (Study I), *total* false friends bring about slightly more errors than partial false friends. These results oppose the idea that partial false friends are more difficult to learn than total false friends (Lengeling, 1995; Frantzen, 2008). In any case, these results are not surprising since learners who resort to partial false friends have some possibilities of using them correctly. Although students do not have a complete knowledge of some specific partial false friends, the fact that these words are used in exactly the same way as the corresponding homographs in the L1 on some occasions, may help learners succeed in getting out of a linguistic problem in certain situations. In this sense we could say that partial FF are not so easy-to-use as real cognates (which share meanings in the L1 and in the L2) but they are not so misleading as total false friends whose lack of knowledge and misuse would result in the conveyance of a radically different meaning. By contrast, the data concerning L2 interpretation show that *partial* false friends are more difficult to grasp than total false friends. Spanish students of English as a foreign language appear to have more problems and doubts when facing partial false friends than when having to interpret total false friends. The problem here arises from the learners' tendency to consistently attach the L1 to the L2 in all contexts (e.g. *crime* in Study II). However, although partial FF can be interpreted in the same way as their homograph in the L1 in some contexts, there are some other situations in which there is no such coincidence of meaning. The inconsistent nature of these terms (sometimes they are true friends, sometimes they are false friends) may have confused learners to a large extent. These results concur with the view of authors, such Hayward and Moulin (1984), Odlin (1989) and Frantzen (2008) who claim that total false friends are easier to process and learn than partial false friends because they tend to be of a more monosemic nature. In order to lessen the difficulties derived from these partial dissimilarities,



learners should develop their sensitivity to apprehend the semantic nuances which are not shared in the L1 and in the L2. In any case, the misuse and misinterpretation of false friends may produce important problems in L2 productive processes and in L2 comprehension. Not knowing the meaning and use of these words may lead to serious misunderstandings and to the expression of completely different meanings.

The results in this dissertation also point to the fact that the frequency of occurrence and use in English classes and a presentation of these lexical items at early stages of language learning appear to result in the successful acquisition of these words. Thus, words such as *parents* and *topic* appear to be two high-frequency nouns in English lessons and data in the corpora show that these words have been perfectly acquired by learners. The word *parents* is one of the very first words that are taught when discussing family relations in English and the word *topic* is recurrently used by teachers when they are introducing a new subject for discussion with formulas such as *the main topic of discussion today will be..., this is a good topic of conversation, etc.* The fact of having encountered these words repeatedly throughout the years in their English lessons and the fact of having to use them on several occasions have helped students acquire these English items in a suitable way.

The data obtained also indicate that when false friends pass unnoticed for students (e.g. *carpet*, *notice*) or when learners are not familiar with these words (e.g. *solicitor*, *suburb*), these lexical items lead students to errors; and this may have unfavourable effects. As a matter of fact, evidence from the two studies shows that false friends are not exclusively a problem of linguistic accuracy. These lexical items can also affect the communication process. As far as production is concerned, the non-native speaker may use a false friend in a context to which it does not apply, in which case the message might not be effective (e.g. *she is an actual woman*). Interpersonal communication may then suffer. Moreover, the wording of the message may look and/or sound strange and the native hearer might inevitably think of the poor linguistic competence of the speaker (which is not desirable). Besides, the misuse of a false friend may result in a misinterpretation of the intended meaning; thus, the receiver may take the non-native speakers' words literally, and this may become a problem. This can be exemplified with utterances, such as *Spanish society felt \*disgust, they don't \*molest persons who don't like smoke* whose literal meanings have little to do with the learners' intended remarks. As regards L2 reception, the misinterpretation of a false friend may result in a misunderstanding of the message and in a flawed production. This could be well

illustrated with the English notices reading *follow diversion* or *it contains no preservatives*. Language learners might be quite sure that they know what these phrases mean due to the existing similarities with words in their mother tongue. However, it is very likely that those learners who have never encountered these words before assign an incorrect meaning to these phrases based on their native language intuitions. These words would be therefore misinterpreted and would drive some learners to incorporate them in their L2 lexicons with the wrong meaning. The misinterpretation of these false friends would then result in a faulty acquisition of two new words. In the light of these arguments, it can be said that the misinterpretation and misuse of false friends may affect not only accuracy but also the communicative purpose of language. However, this certainly depends on the semantic nature of the false friend used. Semantically neutral words would mainly cause problems of accuracy while lexical items which are emotionally charged (e.g. *preservative*, *molest*, *vicious*, etc) may cause more serious problems in communication.

In any case, the results obtained in this dissertation also substantiate the claims of some scholars, such as Palmberg (1987), Laufer (1989) and Verspoor (2008), who assert that false friends can be a problem in both L2 comprehension and L2 production. As regards these two processes, there are authors who contend that false friends are more likely to produce problems in production than in comprehension (Ringbom, 2007). However, the results of this survey do not confirm this hypothesis since more errors have been attested in L2 comprehension than in production. Nevertheless, it seems necessary to give an account as to why English false friends are misunderstood by Spanish learners of English. In this respect, there seem to be cognitive factors operating here and the results of this research seem to validate this idea. Apparently, L2 learners draw lexical associations between their L1 and their L2 (Laufer, 1989; Singleton, 1999; Meara and Fitzpatrick, 2000), which leads them to interpret some unknown words (Paribakht and Wesche, 1999) through their mother tongue. In fact, in Study II, there is clear evidence of L1 activity during the recognition and interpretation of English false friends. Thus, learners draw a clear association between words such as *motorist*, *solicitor*, *collar*, *conductor*, *preservative* and *diversion* in English and their orthographic neighbours in Spanish (Dijkstra and Granger, 1998). The obvious formal overlaps in the vocabularies of the L1 and the L2 “automatically trigger activation of the meaning of the L1 word, via spreading activation from lexical to conceptual levels of the network” (Hall, 2002: 82). Nonetheless, these crosslanguage interactions are counter-productive

since these L2 false friends activate the meaning of their similar looking counterparts in the first language which typically have a different meaning, thus giving way to misinterpretations. In this particular case, learners need to suppress the activation of the meaning in the first language which is not helping them for a suitable understanding of the L2. The findings in these surveys suggest that most lexical problems with false friends happen to be the result of semantic transfer from the L1. In fact, the data collected indicate that the origin of most problems with false friends is in the effect of *crosslinguistic influence*. Spanish students rely too much on their first language as the basis for the interpretation and use of lexical items in English. Apart from that, Spanish learners of English make inferences and assume that an English word such as *motorists* means the same as Spanish *motoristas* “motorcyclists;” and they use the noun *career* as if it were a perfect synonym for Spanish *carrera* meaning “university course.” These crosslinguistic influences and the excessive reliance on the mother tongue to process and produce English texts are also enhanced by the learners’ perception of the similarities between Spanish and English. English and Spanish share some Romance-based words, that is, some cognate terms; these lexical coincidences drive learners to simplify the linguistic reality of the foreign language and to take for granted that similar words between these two languages have the same meanings. Students even tend to disregard the semantic asymmetry between the L1 and its corresponding term in the L2 and they assume semantic identity, as illustrated by the learners’ use of words, such as *crime*, *casual* or *practise*. This idea is normally referred to as *linguistic psychotypology* (Kellerman, 1983). The perception that two languages are closely-related makes them more vulnerable to crosslinguistic influence than non-related languages (Jarvis and Odlin, 2000). The persistent influence of the mother tongue is observed even when words are placed in the context of a sentence as revealed by the results in the reading comprehension task and in the translation activity of the questionnaire. In this respect, these findings provide further evidence to recent investigations which demonstrate that crosslanguage effects are observed even in semantically constrained contexts (Van Hell and De Groot, 2008). This initial misinterpretation of a false friend may become more dangerous when it becomes part of the learners’ output. Then, these lexical mistakes might start to be difficult to overcome and can even fossilise in the learners’ interlanguage if teachers do not pay sufficient attention to these lexical mistakes.

Although the influence of the mother tongue plays an important role in the students’ problems with false friends, there is evidence that proves that Spanish learners

use some false friends as a kind of compensatory device (Tarone, 1980) in order to make up for their limitations in the L2 vocabulary. The learners' strategic use of false friends is shown in examples containing words, such as *conference* (example 90, pp. 145), *exit* (example 117, pp.158), *resume* (example 309, pp. 225) or *pipe* (example 439, pp.266). Sentences, such as *the contestants of "Fame Academy" have more \*exit (successful), \*to resume, if everybody could do it, why we cannot?, the Episcopal Conference (?) xx pronounced a speech last week* clearly illustrate the learners' attempt to communicate certain ideas for which they lack the necessary vocabulary.

As suggested in the previous pages of this dissertation, the data in both studies suggest that there are different factors which explain the learners' problems with English false friends. There are intralinguistic components, such as the type of false friend, the concept of typological similarity between the L1 and the L2 (Kellerman, 1983) or even the frequency of use of orthographically similar words in the L1 (Poulishie and Bogaerts, 1994) as well as extralinguistic factors, some of which are learner-based, such as the speakers' level of L2 proficiency (De Angelis and Selinker, 2001) and some of which are context-based factors including the learning setting, the established instructional priorities, the contact with the L2 and the educational background (Odlin, 1989) which play a role in the correct interpretation and use of these lexical items. With regard to this last issue, the data obtained especially in the second part of the questionnaire seem to suggest that the educational setting, that is, learning English as a foreign language in Spain which normally implies having little contact with English outside the classroom does not promote the students' learning of these words. This coupled with the little attention paid to these lexical items in EFL settings results in the learners' failure to understand and use these words in a correct way. In addition to this, the teachers' tendency to overemphasise cognates and even the teachers' lack of knowledge in this particular area might reinforce the learners' incorrect use of English false friends. The next paragraphs will touch upon the main pedagogical implications of this study and some issues that should be addressed in the English classroom.

#### **5.4. Pedagogical Implications: Action in the EFL Classroom**

The ultimate aim of this dissertation is to provide language professionals with information on how false friends affect the learners' understanding of English and how the misuse of these words may influence the quality and accuracy of the learners'

written and spoken performance. The evidence taken from the corpora and from the questionnaire used allowed us to obtain reliable information on the main problematic areas which teachers and learners need to improve and work on in order to avoid a constant misinterpretation and misuse of these English words.

The findings presented in this dissertation can serve language teachers and learners as a guide to approach English false friends in the classroom effectively. Once the main areas of difficulty have been identified (see figures 25 and 46, pp. 296, 404 for an organisation of the 100 FF analysed organised into levels of difficulty), teachers should be ready to prevent and stop these problems in learners' speech and writing. Thus, the data found reveal that Spanish learners tend to have difficulties with certain high-frequency English false friends, such as *career*, *assist*, *note* or *paper*. It has also been shown that the recurrent occurrence of these words in English lessons as well as the early introduction of these words and the teachers' output appear to be effective and seem to have a bearing on the absence of mistakes in the use of words, such as *parents* and *topic*. The results in both studies suggest that teachers do not seem to provide students with enough input on the semantic and pragmatic differences between L1 and L2 similar words and they do not pay sufficient attention to certain peculiarities of false friends usage: register, typical collocations and grammatical properties (scarcity of sections on false friends in textbooks). Likewise, evidence from both corpora indicates that students with an advanced level of the language are still influenced by their mother tongue and have difficulties with false friends (*qualifications*). This means that teachers appear to pay little attention to these words at advanced levels. This might be due to the teachers' emphasis on communication and fluency rather than on accuracy. However, we have seen that these words may cause confusions, as exemplified by utterances, such as *Don't molest me, now I am busy* (Nash, 1979: 34), or *I assist my English class four times a week* (Lengeling, 1995: 17) and this is not by any means desirable. We should give students the opportunities to be really competent users of the language; for this reason, teachers should take action and give students some feedback on the correct interpretation and use of these English words.

These words should be taught and revised at all levels since the misuse and misinterpretation of FF might produce problems at different levels of competence. Teachers should not take for granted that basic false friends which could have been already studied in previous courses do not deserve attention. It may be the case that advanced students do not remember these basic items and problems arise. This

definitely shows the importance of revision and recycling of false friends in the English class. As regards teachers' action in the EFL classroom, language instructors should raise the learners' awareness on false friends, special attention should be paid to those false friends which are potentially embarrassing or cause serious misunderstandings (e.g. *preservative*, *soap* or *molest*) without worrying so much as to affect the learners' flow of discourse (especially in conversation activities). Furthermore, teachers should emphasise some commonly used false friends (e.g. *large*, *actual*) and emphasise the role of context in vocabulary learning and should not approach lexis as a compilation of single words with fixed meanings. In this way, difficulties concerning word usage could be greatly reduced. A good way to do so is by giving students some background knowledge on the pronunciation of these lexical items, their meaning, collocations and usage by means of illustrative examples which may give students a clear idea of the meaning and use of these items in English. This reduces the probability of drawing incorrect links between this word and the similar lexical item in Spanish, favouring the students' meaningful learning of these words. Teachers should develop appealing, interesting and effective techniques for the presentation, practice and production of these words. An important issue to take into account when teaching these lexical items is the variety of English we are dealing with (e.g. *professor* is a total false friend between British English and Spanish, but it is a partial false friends between American English and Spanish). Undoubtedly, students' problems with false friends could be greatly reduced if teachers paid more attention to these lexical items. Audiovisual materials (pictures, cartoons) and other teaching techniques, such as definitions, useful collocations, fill-in-the-blanks activities, real signs and funny texts would be useful tools to promote students' learning of false friends and to arouse the learners' reflection on the potential misunderstandings caused by those tricky words in naturally occurring contexts. Many different tasks can be used for the presentation, practice and use of false friends. The activities included in the questionnaire which you can see in Appendix 1 (pp. 455) are an illustration of some of them. Other tasks including the use of mnemonics, pictures and texts can be used to foster the learning of these words (see Appendix 2, pp. 463).

All in all, explicit instruction is needed since the results and the number of mistakes observed (over one fourth of the total number of false friends analysed show problems of misuse and misinterpretation) are not encouraging for language teachers. It is remarkable that errors persevere in learner language even when these English words

are likely to be previously found by students in their learning process. It is also important to entice students into a meaningful learning of these words and treat these words as any other lexical items in the EFL classroom using inspiring activities and trying to meet the students' needs and lacks concerning these lexical items so that learners become more competent users of the language. Therefore, teachers, learners and material developers and all the agents involved in ELF teaching and learning should make an effort to overcome the difficulties described all throughout this dissertation. This dissertation has offered a description of the main problems Spanish learners have with English false friends, it is now time for language professionals to devise effective tools to prevent and solve these vocabulary problems adopting the measures that they consider effective to their corresponding group of learners.

### **5.5. Issues for Further Research**

The study of the learners' perception, interpretation and use of English false friends should not finish with this dissertation. In fact, more research is needed and there are areas of the topic which could not be tackled here due to time limitations and space constraints. After pinpointing the learners' main problems with false friends in the receptive and productive use of English, it would be very interesting to carry out research on the most recurrent teaching and learning techniques used to approach these lexical items and on the effectiveness of different strategies and techniques.

It may be also worth doing a longitudinal study in order to assess the learners' progress with these words and in order to obtain a reliable explanation as to why false friends continue to be a handicap at advanced levels of language competence.

The teachers' attitudes to and their knowledge of these English words should be also examined. This issue is of vital importance to the problem of false friends and to its treatment in the classroom.

Another interesting issue for further research is to look into the existence of false friends between the major standard varieties of English and the so-called European English or Euro-English, that is, the English used for intra-European communication whose users "are not British (and not American or Canadian or Australian or any other native variety), but are distinctly European and distinguish European English speakers of other varieties" (Berns 1995: 7).

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APPENDIX 1:

QUESTIONNAIRE



## CONCEPTO E INTERPRETACIÓN DE TÉRMINOS SEMEJANTES

Este cuestionario ha sido elaborado con el fin de identificar las dificultades que te plantean ciertas palabras inglesas. Tus respuestas constituirán una parte importante de mi tesis doctoral. Calculo que te llevará entre 15 y 30 minutos completarlo. ¡Muchas gracias por tu colaboración!

DATOS PERSONALES <sup>1</sup>	
NOMBRE(opcional)	
LUGAR DE NACIMIENTO:	
EMAIL/ TELÉFONO DE CONTACTO (opcional)	

1. SEXO	
	Mujer
	Hombre

2. EDAD	
	Entre 12 y 16
	Entre 17 y 18
	Entre 19 y 21
	Entre 22 y 23
	Mayor de 24

3. LENGUA MATERNA	
	Gallego
	Español
	Inglés
	Otras (especifica cuál):

4. CONOCIMIENTO DE OTRAS LENGUAS		Sí <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Indica cuáles			

5. ESTUDIOS QUE ESTÁ REALIZANDO	→ 6. CURSO
BACHILLERATO	Primero
CLM	Segundo
E.O.I.	Tercero
UNIVERSIDAD	Cuarto
Otros (especifica):	Quinto
	Sexto/Séptimo/Octavo

6. Considero que MI NIVEL DE INGLÉS es...	
	Básico 1
	Básico 2
	Intermedio 1
	Intermedio 2
	Avanzado 1
	Avanzado 2

7. ESTANCIAS EN PAÍSES DE HABLA INGLESA		Sí <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Lugar y duración de la/s estancia/s			



















MI ACTITUD ANTE EL INGLÉS	
8. ¿Me gusta el inglés?	Mucho <input type="checkbox"/> Bastante <input type="checkbox"/> Poco <input type="checkbox"/> Nada <input type="checkbox"/>
9. ¿Escucho, leo o hablo inglés cuando puedo?	Sí <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> A veces <input type="checkbox"/>
10. El vocabulario es importante en el aprendizaje de un idioma	Mucho <input type="checkbox"/> Bastante <input type="checkbox"/> Poco <input type="checkbox"/> Nada <input type="checkbox"/>

<sup>1</sup> Los datos facilitados tienen carácter confidencial y se utilizarán con fines de investigación científica. Si tienes alguna pregunta, por favor ponte en contacto conmigo en el siguiente correo electrónico: luisa10@yahoo.com



**PARTE I:**



**Actividad 1.** Marca con una **X** la/s imagen/es que mejor ilustre/n el significado de las palabras en negrita

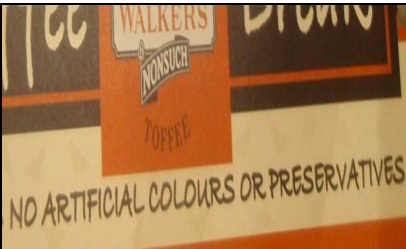


11. <b>CAMERA</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
12. <b>COLLAR</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
13. <b>CONDUCTOR</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
14. <b>CRIME</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
15. <b>EMBARRASSED</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
16. <b>INHABITED</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
17. <b>LECTURE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
18. <b>ROPE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
19. <b>QUIET</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	

Actividad 2. Indica si las siguientes definiciones son correctas (✓) o no (X):	✓	X
20. <b>ASSIST</b> : To be present at.		
21. <b>CASUALTY</b> : Injured or killed in an accident.		
22. <b>COLLEGE</b> : A public school of primary education.		
23. <b>MAYOR</b> : The chief executive official of a city, village, or town.		
24. <b>FIRM</b> : Signature. Your name written in your own handwriting		

Actividad 3. Indica si las siguientes frases son correctas (✓) o inapropiadas (X)			
25. To <i>accommodate</i> a friend		30. <i>Fine wine</i>	
26. Bread and meat are <i>basic commodities</i>		31. <i>Appoint</i> with a gun	
27. A <i>blank expression</i> on your face		32. <i>Locals</i> to rent	
28. A <i>summer camp</i>		33. <i>Realize</i> an investigation	
29. A <i>water pipe</i>		34. Give someone a <i>good notice</i>	

Actividad 4. Subraya la palabra más adecuada al contexto.
35. My grandma is very <b>SENSITIVE/ SENSIBLE</b> ; she cries very easily.
36. I do not want to study a university <b>CAREER/DEGREE</b> .
37. Her last book was a big <b>SUCCESS/EXIT</b> .
38. It is expensive to hire <b>CASUAL/ EVENTUAL</b> workers.

Actividad 5. Te presento algunos carteles que puedes encontrar en el Reino Unido. Piensa en qué lugar los puedes encontrar (en una tienda, envase de producto, carretera, aparcamiento) y cuál es su significado.	
39	 <p>Contexto (ej: en una tienda, envase de producto, carretera, aparcamiento).....</p> <p>Traducción:.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
40	 <p>Contexto (ej: en una tienda, envase de producto, carretera, aparcamiento).....</p> <p>Traducción:.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>

41		Contexto (ej: en una tienda, envase de producto, carretera, etc)..... Traducción:..... ..... .....
42		Contexto (ej: en una tienda, envase de producto, carretera, etc)..... Traducción:..... ..... .....
43		Contexto (ej: en una tienda, envase de producto, carretera, etc)..... Traducción:..... ..... .....

**Actividad 6.** Lee el siguiente párrafo y elige la respuesta/s correcta/s (a, b o c) de acuerdo con lo que dice el texto. Las palabras en **negrita** te dan las pistas para la respuesta.

Famous **solicitor** Harry Davies is being accused of **molesting** a 45-year-old **professor**. The solicitor was arrested in his house located in a well-known **suburb** of London. At the moment of the detention, he was **casually dressed** and **pretended** to be relaxed. However, a simple conversation with him was enough for the police to realise that he was a **bizarre** person. Now the solicitor is being treated in a psychiatric hospital.

44. ¿Qué profesión tiene Harry?	45. ¿De qué se le acusa?	46. ¿Cuál es la profesión de la persona de 45 años?	47. ¿Dónde está situada la casa de Harry?
a) Conductor b) Abogado c) Solicitante	a) De molestar a una persona de 45 años b) De discutir con un persona de 45 años c) De abusar sexualmente de una persona de 45 años	a) Maestra (escuela) b) Un/a aprendiz c) Profesora de Universidad	a) En un suburbio b) En una zona residencial c) En el centro de Londres
48. "At the moment of the detention, he was <b>casually dressed</b> " significa que "en el momento de la detención ...	49. He <b>pretended to be relaxed</b> significa que...	50. A <b>Bizarre person</b> es...	
a) Estaba vestido por casualidad b) Llevaba ropa informal/casual c) Estaba disfrazado	a) Fingía estar relajado b) Intentaba estar relajado c) Estaba relajado	a) Valiente b) Extraño c) Enfermo	

**PARTE II:**

1)	Cuando hablamos de <i>falsos amigos</i> ( <i>false friends</i> , en inglés), nos referimos ...
	<i>A una palabra con varios significados (e.g. get)</i>
	<i>A palabras parecidas en dos idiomas que tienen significados diferentes (e.g. case y caso)</i>
	<i>A palabras que suelen aparecer juntas (e.g. go home)</i>

2)	Considero que los <i>falsos amigos</i> son ...	Muy importantes	Importantes	Poco importantes	Nada importantes
Razona tu respuesta: .....					
.....					

3)	¿Consideras que existen muchos <i>falsos amigos</i> en inglés?	SÍ	NO
Pon ejemplos (máximo 5)			

4) ¿Cómo se suelen enseñar los falsos amigos en el aula?					
	Nunca	Raras veces	A veces	Frecuentemente	Siempre
4.1) Con un listado y su traducción					
4.2) Con ejemplos aclaratorios					
4.3) Con su definición					
4.4) Con sinónimos o antónimos					
4.5) Con uso de diccionario					
4.6) A través del libro de texto					
4.7) Con dibujos que ilustran el significado					
4.8) Otros:(por favor, especifica)..... .....					

5)	¿Tu libro de texto dedica alguna sección a los <i>falsos amigos</i> ?	SÍ	NO
Si tu respuesta es negativa, ¿consideras que se debieran incluir?			

6) ¿Cómo aprendes o estudias los falsos amigos?					
	Nunca	Raras veces	A veces	Frecuentemente	Siempre
6.1) Haciendo listas con su traducción					
6.2) Asociando su significado con un dibujo/imagen					
6.3) Buscando un ejemplo claro					
6.4) Escribiendo un sinónimo o un antónimo					
6.5) Relaciono la palabra con una situación					
6.6) Fijándome en su uso en textos, conversaciones,...					
6.7) Consultando el diccionario					
6.8) Mirando usos de esa palabra en Internet					
6.9) Preguntando a un hablante nativo					
6.10) Otros:(especifica):..... .....					

7) ¿Cuáles son las principales dificultades que te plantean los falsos amigos a la hora de comprender o expresar un mensaje en lengua inglesa?



A nivel de comprensión....(lectura y escucha)	SÍ	NO
7.1) En general, cuando no conozco una palabra en un texto, deduzco su significado basándome en mi lengua materna.		
7.2) Tengo dificultades para entender mensajes escritos y orales que contengan falsos amigos o palabras que no conozco.		
7.3) El conocimiento de los falsos amigos es importante porque en ocasiones el contexto no nos aclara su significado real.		
7.4) Textos ingleses que contienen palabras parecidas al español (latinismos) son fáciles de entender.		
7.5) Otras dificultades (especifica).....		



A nivel de producción...(escritura y habla)	SÍ	NO
7.6) En general, considero que mi lengua materna me influye negativamente a la hora de expresarme en inglés.		
7.7) Me preocupa cometer errores gramaticales o léxicos cuando hablo/escribo en otro idioma.		
7.8) A veces utilizo falsos amigos en inglés de forma incorrecta como una estrategia para mantener la conversación.		
7.9) Me parece que los falsos amigos son palabras confusas, difíciles de aprender, asimilar y usar correctamente.		
7.10) Otras dificultades (especifica).....		

Si tienes alguna duda sobre el tema o sugerencia acerca de este cuestionario, por favor escríbelo aquí:

.....  
 .....  
 .....

¡¡GRACIAS POR TU OPINIÓN!

## APPENDIX 2:

# SAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES FOR THE TEACHING AND PRACTICE OF FALSE FRIENDS



## A) TECHNIQUES FOR THE PRESENTATION OF FALSE FRIENDS

### 1. Use of signs and real notices



The previous sign can be used to introduce the topic of false friends since it contains two of these words: *career* and *exit*. Students can be asked to discuss the message conveyed in this sign. On the basis of the class discussion, teachers can introduce these words and add some more examples.

### 2. Use of rhymes and mnemonic devices

*English has some tricky words*  
*diversion isn't diversion*  
*rope isn't ropa*  
*and English preservatives are used to keep food fresh.*

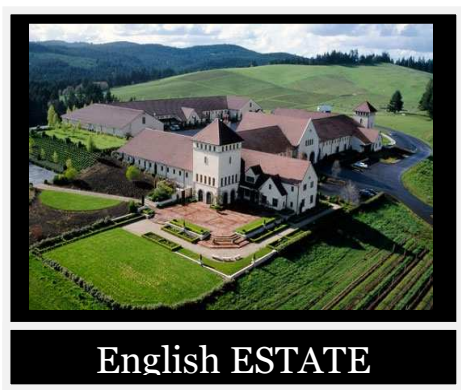
Teachers can also make use of rhymes and other mnemonic devices to help learners become aware of the existence of these misleading terms in English.



### 3. Use of visuals and contrasts between English and Spanish



**VS**



**VS**



**VS**

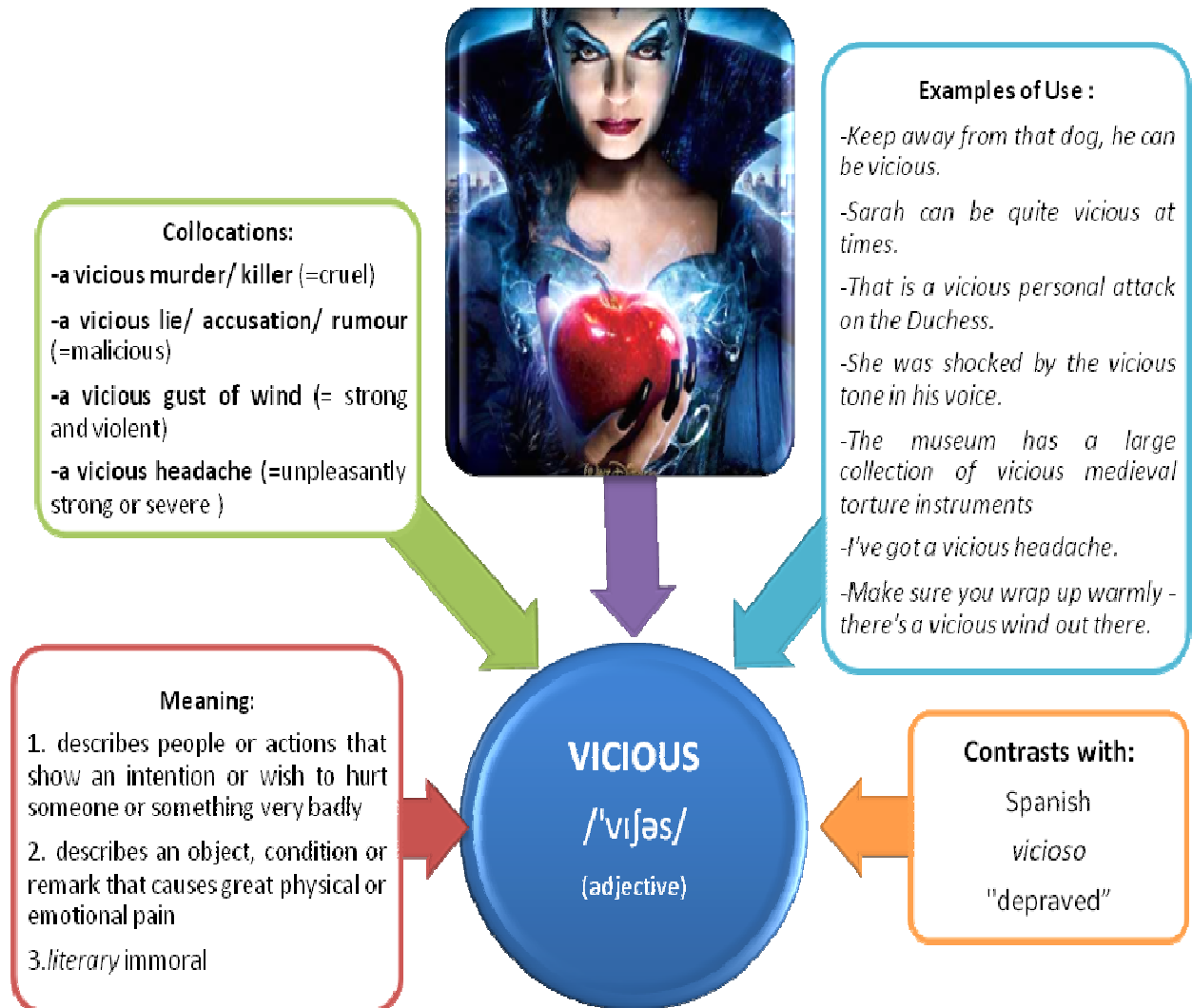


**VS**



It is important for learners to notice the semantic differences between the English word and the similar Spanish lexical item. Pictures may be useful learning aids.

#### 4. Use of diagrams with information on meaning and use



When teaching vocabulary it is important to give students some information about the pronunciation, meaning, collocations and use. Learners can be provided with illustrative examples which help them remember the word in an appropriate context.

## B) TECHNIQUES FOR FALSE FRIEND PRACTICE

### 1. Match the word with the corresponding pictures



## **2. Select the correct definition**

Library

- a) a room where books are kept
- b) a building that houses a collection of books and other materials
- c) a shop where books are sold

College

- a) an institution of higher education; often a part of a university
- b) a building where young people receive education
- c) public secondary school

Topic

- a) a stereotype, an obvious remark
- b) the subject matter of a conversation or discussion
- c) completely ordinary and unremarkable comment

Conference

- a) prearranged meeting for consultation or exchange of information or discussion
- b) a speech that is open to the public
- c) teaching by giving a discourse on some subject (typically to a class)

Discussion

- a) the process of doing something
- b) a dispute
- c) an exchange of views on some topic

Argument

- a) a scientific paper
- b) a dispute
- c) a relaxed dialogue

Bank

- a) a long seat for more than one person
- b) the slope beside a body of water
- c) a financial institution that accepts deposits and channels the money into lending activities

**3. Use these words in a sentence.**

ACTUALLY	
CHARACTER	
ADVERTISE	
EVENTUALLY	
NOTICE (noun)	
ASSIST	
RESUME	
MOLEST	

**4. Fill the gaps by choosing the most appropriate answer in brackets.**

1. Did you know that Chrissie got \_\_\_\_\_ (embarrassed/pregnant) on holiday in Ibiza?
2. The \_\_\_\_\_ (signature/subject) I hate most is maths.
3. Begonia is a very \_\_\_\_\_ (kind /sympathetic) person.
4. I couldn't agree more. That's a very \_\_\_\_\_ (sensible/sensitive) idea.
5. The film *The Quiet American* was a box-office \_\_\_\_\_ (exit/success).
6. How many \_\_\_\_\_ (idioms/languages) can you speak?
7. I've got \_\_\_\_\_ (a cold/constipation). Pass me a tissue, please.
8. I was only living with my parents \_\_\_\_\_ (eventually/temporarily).
9. \_\_\_\_\_ (Eventually/Temporarily), we decided to go on holiday rather than buying a home cinema kit
10. All my immediate family live in England but I have a lot of \_\_\_\_\_ (parents/relatives) in Canada.

(Source: <http://perso.wanadoo.es/autoenglish/gr.false.p.htm>)

**5. Explain what these signs are telling us.**

**6. Write a story in which you use the following words.**

actual , carpet, inhabited, assist, realise, bank, resume, paper, various, preservatives.

**7. Translate the following sequences into Spanish paying special attention to the possible existence of false friends.**

1. *We pitched camp at a fine spot.*
2. *Marsha was quite casual about appearing on TV.*
3. *He practised as a barrister*
4. *Street-fights are an everyday occurrence in this area of the city.*
5. *The shelling caused thousands of civilian casualties*
6. *He loosened his collar and tie.*
7. *I attended the College of Arts and Sciences at New York University.*
8. *Water is a precious commodity*
9. *Zoe looked at me with a blank expression.*
10. *His behaviour became more and more bizarre*
11. *This alarm clock takes two medium-sized batteries.*
12. *A person's medical records are confidential.*
13. *She has been removed from her position as director.*
14. *Peace talks will resume tomorrow.*
15. *It would be sensible to take an umbrella.*
16. *Wash thoroughly with soap and water.*
17. *You need to see a solicitor.*
18. *I stuck a 50p stamp on the envelope.*
19. *He succeeded in winning a pardon.*
20. *I have absolutely no sympathy for students who get caught cheating in exams.*

**8. Write the first word, synonym, phrase, idea that comes to your mind related to the following words.**

Example: TAXI... taxi rank, cab, means of transport,.....

ACCOMMODATE.....

ADEQUATE.....

APPOINT.....

CASUAL.....

COMMODITIES.....

FACILITIES.....

FIGURE.....

FIRM.....

FRESH.....

POLICY.....

QUALIFICATIONS.....

REGULAR.....

ESTATE.....

SUBURBS.....

SUPPORT.....

SYMPATHY.....

SOAP.....

TAP.....



## C) AWARENESS-RAISING ACTIVITIES

(building awareness of specific false friends)

### 1. Guessing meaning of false friends from context using the news.

“Southern Railway extends scheme to report crime by email”



Southern Railway wants its passengers to report incidents of anti-social behaviour, vandalism and fare evasion.

Southern Railway extends scheme to report crime by email

An initiative which encourages rail passengers to report incidents of low-level crime by email is being extended through Sussex, Surrey and Kent.

Southern Railway wants its passengers to report incidents of anti-social behaviour, vandalism

... Eyewitness, has a small part of the

... of its staff members across its network received

... Martin Grier said: "If we're able to intercept the train and the individuals

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Passengers urged to

(Source: BBC News England. 25 June 2012)

“Cyclist deaths and casualties in London – the facts”



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**Andrew Gilligan**

I'm the Telegraph's London Editor. This blog is mostly about London. Our newspapers are where I write about everything else. Got a tip or a story for either? Email me at [andrew.gilligan@telegraph.co.uk](mailto:andrew.gilligan@telegraph.co.uk)

## Cyclist deaths and casualties in London – the facts

By **Andrew Gilligan** Politics Last updated: February 5th, 2012

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So to say that the deaths “went up by 60 per cent” last year (...) The serious injury figure, however, is big enough to take trends from.

(Source: The Telegraph. 5 February 2012)

## 2. Exploiting humorous situations.



"Police clashed with protesters again today. Witnesses say the fabrics, textures and color schemes were just hideous."



### **3. Exploring false friends on the internet.**

Online dictionaries of false friends:

<http://www.eloihr.net/falsefriends/index.php?page=diccionario>

<http://mbonillo.xavierre.com/httpdocs/gramatica/falsefriends/Bfalse.html>

Online list of alphabetically ordered false friends:

<http://www.miguelmllop.com/glos/index.php?letter=a>

Blogs about false friends:

<http://falsecognates.blogspot.com/>

<http://falsos-amigos.blogspot.com/>

British and American English false friends:

<http://www.theenglishteacheronline.com/false-friend/>

Videos about false friends in youtube:

[http://www.kewego.es/video/iLyROoaft\\_b1.html](http://www.kewego.es/video/iLyROoaft_b1.html)

Teachers can recommend students to take advantage of the new technologies to expand their knowledge of false friends. Today the web offers a wide variety of sources in which students can find information on these tricky terms, the websites on this page are just a few of the many options that the web offers.

## ❧ RESUMEN EN ESPAÑOL ❧



## TESIS DOCTORAL

### *Nuevas Aproximaciones al Estudio de los Falsos Amigos: Su Uso y Comprensión por parte de Estudiantes Españoles de Inglés*

#### (RESUMEN)

#### INTRODUCCIÓN

Esta tesis versa sobre los falsos amigos y tiene como principal objetivo identificar las dificultades que plantean estas palabras a nivel de expresión y comprensión oral y escrita en el aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera. Con este trabajo se intenta analizar la transcendencia que el mal uso de estas palabras tiene en la producción oral y escrita de los estudiantes españoles. Asimismo, se pretende sacar a la luz posibles problemas de comprensión derivados de la presencia de los falsos amigos en la lengua inglesa. Para ello se han realizado dos estudios independientes pero complementarios que analizan la producción y la comprensión de estudiantes de inglés de nivel intermedio y avanzado, con una mayor representación de estos últimos. Dichos estudios se han llevado a cabo con la ayuda de distintos materiales e instrumentos de investigación. Por un lado, se han empleado tres corpus de aprendices: el SULEC, el ICLE y el LINDSEI, para analizar el uso que los estudiantes hacen de 100 falsos amigos entre el inglés y el español. Por otro lado, se ha diseñado un cuestionario que incluye diversas tareas y preguntas directas que nos han ayudado a precisar los errores de comprensión causados por los falsos amigos. El propósito último de esta tesis consiste en identificar las necesidades y dificultades de los estudiantes en torno a estos elementos léxicos con el fin de prevenir y solucionar cualquier carencia al respecto.

En las páginas siguientes, se exponen de manera muy general los principios que han guiado la elaboración de este trabajo. Asimismo, se esbozan los fundamentos teóricos que han dado lugar a esta investigación, sus objetivos, metodología, resultados obtenidos y conclusiones alcanzadas. Para hacer una descripción organizada y clara de cada uno de estos puntos, se seguirá la división en capítulos en la que se ha estructurado la tesis original en inglés.

En líneas generales, este trabajo se divide en cinco capítulos principales. Los dos primeros tienen una clara dimensión teórica y su objetivo es proporcionar un marco teórico de referencia que nos ayude a comprender la problemática de los falsos amigos. Después, se presentan y explican los estudios empírico-prácticos encaminados a

investigar el tema en cuestión en los capítulos tres y cuatro. Un último capítulo (el capítulo cinco) pone el colofón a esta investigación resumiendo las principales conclusiones, las implicaciones y algunas cuestiones que se podrían abordar en un futuro. La estructura de la tesis, así como los temas más relevantes que se tratan en cada uno de sus capítulos, se muestran de manera muy esquemática a continuación.

<b>INTRODUCCIÓN</b>	Justificación, planteamiento del problema y objetivos del estudio.
<b>CAPÍTULO 1</b>	<b>Definición y Clasificación</b>  Terminología, definiciones y clasificaciones. Los falsos amigos entre distintas lenguas y entre variedades de una misma lengua.
<b>CAPÍTULO 2</b>	<b>Marco Teórico</b>  Marco de la Investigación: Importancia de FA en distintas áreas de conocimiento: traducción, psicolingüística, adquisición de segundas lenguas y lexicografía. Los falsos amigos y los procesos de producción y comprensión de una lengua extranjera.
<b>CAPÍTULO 3</b>	<b>Estudio 1: Uso de los Falsos Amigos</b>  Estudio de corpus: Objetivos, metodología, materiales, análisis cualitativo y cuantitativo, discusión de resultados y conclusiones.
<b>CAPÍTULO 4</b>	<b>Estudio 2: Interpretación de los Falsos Amigos</b>  Investigación a través de un cuestionario: Objetivos, metodología, materiales, análisis cualitativo y cuantitativo, discusión de resultados y conclusiones.
<b>CAPÍTULO 5</b>	<b>Conclusiones</b>  Principales conclusiones, implicaciones y cuestiones para abordar en un futuro.

Seguidamente, se procede a la descripción y explicación de los contenidos tratados en cada uno de los capítulos.

## **CAPÍTULO 1. TERMINOLOGÍA, DEFINICIONES Y CLASIFICACIONES.**

### **LOS FALSOS AMIGOS ENTRE DISTINTAS LENGUAS Y ENTRE VARIEDADES DE UNA MISMA LENGUA.**

Son muchos los autores que han señalado que los falsos amigos constituyen un problema para los estudiantes (Prado, 1989; Frantzen, 1998; Durán Escribano, 2004; Chacón Beltrán, 2006; Chamizo Domínguez, 2008). Tal y como se ha explicado a lo largo de esta tesis, este fenómeno tiene una larga tradición lingüística y afecta fundamentalmente a palabras formalmente similares de distintas lenguas que poseen un significado o uso diferentes. Sabemos que la razón por la que existen palabras similares en distintas lenguas se debe principalmente a los llamados cognados o palabras que derivan etimológicamente de la misma raíz (Van Roey, 1985; Crystal, 1994). Estas palabras que inicialmente tienen el mismo significado en las lenguas receptoras van adquiriendo usos y matices diferentes dependiendo del contexto; y es esta evolución de las palabras la que hacen que dos cognados se conviertan en falsos amigos. Si bien la mayor parte de los falsos amigos tienen su origen en palabras cognadas, hay algunos lexemas que se parecen en distintas lenguas por mera casualidad, es decir, la similitud formal entre ciertas palabras de dos idiomas diferentes puede ser pura coincidencia (ej. *pan* en español y *pan* en inglés).

Con respecto a la nomenclatura utilizada para referirse a este fenómeno, las etiquetas más comunes son las de «falsos amigos» y «falsos cognados». Sin embargo, cabe señalar que este último término no parece del todo adecuado. En un sentido estricto, y en contraposición a cognados que serían palabras que tienen un étimo común, los falsos cognados serían aquellas palabras que se asemejan en dos idiomas diferentes por pura coincidencia pero que no comparten una misma etimología. Sin embargo, este fenómeno puede afectar a palabras etimológicamente relacionadas o cognados que han adquirido un significado diferente en distintas lenguas y contextos, y palabras que se asemejan en dos idiomas diferentes por pura coincidencia (también denominadas falsos cognados). Por este motivo, se opta en esta tesis por la expresión metafórica de falsos amigos, ya que constituye un término más integrador y que se ajusta más a la realidad del fenómeno. Cabe indicar que esta etiqueta fue introducida por primera vez en francés (*faux-amis*) en 1928 por Koessler y Derocquigny.

Han sido muchas las definiciones que se han propuesto para describir este fenómeno lingüístico. Chalker y Weiner lo definen como “una palabra que tiene la



misma forma o similar en dos (o más) lenguas, pero significados diferentes en cada una de estas lenguas” (1996:149). Aún así, este trabajo ofrece una definición más precisa del término en la que se indica que el parecido formal de los falsos amigos puede ser ortográfico, fonético o en ambas cosas a la vez (ortofonético) y que estas palabras pueden diferir en su significado o contexto de uso de manera parcial o total. El hecho de que haya distintos tipos de parecido formal y divergencia semántica y pragmática entre estas palabras ha llevado a muchos autores a hablar de distintos tipos de falsos amigos (Álvarez Lugrís, 1998). Así, son varios los expertos que hablan de distintas categorías de falsos amigos. En el plano formal, podemos hablar de tres clases de falsos amigos: *ortográficos*, *fonéticos*, *ortofonéticos* (consultar páginas: 23, 24 y 31 de la tesis) y en el plano semántico, se establecen comúnmente dos grandes categorías: *falsos amigos totales* y *parciales*. En este estudio, se añade un tercer tipo de falsos amigos: el de FA *estilísticos* o *contextuales*.

Al final del capítulo 1, se señala que, aunque generalmente se identifican falsos amigos en lenguas cognadas (alemán *Gift* “veneno” inglés *gift* “regalo”) o lenguas históricamente muy relacionadas (francés y el inglés: conquista normanda), existen también parecidos léxicos entre lenguas no relacionadas como el inglés y el ruso (*sympathetic* “comprensivo” y *simpatichniy* “guapo/a”) o el eslovaco y el español (*misa* “plato” y *misa* “servicio religioso”), y lo que es más sorprendente: se han detectado falsos amigos entre variedades de una misma lengua (inglés británico *fag* “cigarro” /inglés americano *fag* “marica”; español ibérico *carro* “apero agrícola”/español latinoamericano *carro* “coche”). Finalmente, este primer capítulo muestra cómo el mal uso de ciertos falsos amigos puede provocar situaciones incómodas y/o graciosas.

## **CAPÍTULO 2. MARCO TEÓRICO. IMPORTANCIA DE FALSOS AMIGOS EN DIFERENTES CAMPOS DE ESTUDIO: TRADUCCIÓN, PSICOLINGÜÍSTICA, ADQUISICIÓN DE SEGUNDAS LENGUAS Y LEXICOGRAFÍA. LOS FALSOS AMIGOS Y LOS PROCESOS DE PRODUCCIÓN Y COMPRENSIÓN DE UNA LENGUA EXTRANJERA.**

El segundo capítulo de la tesis hace un recorrido por algunos de los trabajos más relevantes que se han centrado en el tema de los falsos amigos. En el campo de la traducción, hemos visto que se han hecho estudios (Granger and Swallow, 1988; Hopkinson, 2004; Chacón Beltrán, 2006) que demuestran que los traductores profesionales tienen problemas con

estas palabras y que estos términos constituyen un desafío diario para traductores e intérpretes (Venuti, 2002). En el área de la psicolingüística, hay estudios que explican que existe un mecanismo cognitivo por el cual se establecen asociaciones semánticas en nuestro cerebro entre palabras que son formalmente similares en distintos idiomas que son difíciles de superar (Lalor and Pál 2000; Kirsner, 2001; Dijkstra and van Heuven, 2002; Hall, 2002). De esta manera, un falso amigo en la lengua extranjera activa el significado de su homólogo ortográfico o fonético en la lengua materna, dando lugar a confusiones y malas interpretaciones. Desde el punto de vista de la adquisición, los falsos amigos son considerados como un claro ejemplo de interferencia lingüística (Frutos Martínez, 2001; Zollner, 2002; Fonseca da Silva, 2003; Wagner, 2004; Chacón Beltrán, 2006) y como obstáculo importante a la hora de aprender una lengua extranjera. En cuanto al campo de la lexicografía, la existencia de falsos amigos ha llevado a muchos lexicógrafos a describir y registrar estas palabras en diccionarios (Szpila, 2005). Así, por ejemplo, los diccionarios de Hill (1982), Cuenca (1987), Prado (2003) y Postigo Pinazo (2007) son muestra del esfuerzo de algunos lingüistas por compilar estas palabras en diccionarios específicos. Después de hablar de la importancia de este fenómeno en distintos campos de estudio y para terminar con el capítulo de revisión de la bibliografía, se analiza el impacto de los falsos amigos en los procesos de producción y comprensión de una segunda lengua. En esta sección vemos cómo algunos autores sostienen que los falsos amigos podrían dificultar tanto la comprensión como el uso de una segunda lengua (Palmberg, 1987; Verspoor, 2008) causando más problemas a nivel de producción que a nivel de interpretación (Ringbom, 2007).

### **CAPÍTULO 3. EL USO DE LOS FALSOS AMIGOS POR PARTE DE ESTUDIANTES ESPAÑOLES DE INGLÉS**

La mayoría de los estudios que tratan el tema de los falsos amigos hacen un análisis contrastivo del fenómeno (Lado, 1957). Cabe destacar que son pocos los estudiosos que han recurrido a los corpus para investigar el uso real que los alumnos hacen de estos vocablos en su interlengua, y estos que lo hacen se centran fundamentalmente en la expresión escrita (Granger, 1996; Palacios and Alonso, 2005) obviando su uso en la lengua oral. Por eso, este primer estudio viene a cubrir algunas lagunas importantes que se han detectado en investigaciones anteriores. En él se analiza el uso de 100 falsos amigos en tres corpus distintos que contienen textos orales y escritos de estudiantes

españoles de inglés y que han sido imprescindibles para identificar las dificultades que presentan estas palabras a la hora de hablar o de escribir en inglés (*Santiago University Learner of English Corpus*, *International Corpus of Learner English* y *Louvain International Database of Spoken English Interlanguage*). Los falsos amigos investigados han sido catalogados como palabras de alta frecuencia en inglés, por lo que conviene que los estudiantes sepan usarlas adecuadamente. Además de tres bases de datos, se ha usado el software gratuito *AntConc* para la búsqueda de dichas palabras y de las concordancias en las que se encuentran estas palabras. Una vez extraídas las concordancias, éstas se analizan y se hace un registro de los problemas que los alumnos tienen con el fin de diseñar en un futuro técnicas pedagógicas que consigan remediarlos.

El primer estudio se divide en ocho secciones diferentes: en la primera se justifica su realización; en la segunda se exponen los objetivos; en la tercera y cuarta se habla de los participantes y de los instrumentos de investigación; en la quinta se explica el procedimiento. Finalmente, en la sexta, séptima y octava se exponen los datos, los resultados y se resumen las principales conclusiones.

El estudio de corpus que aquí se presenta examina el uso de los falsos amigos en la expresión oral y escrita de los españoles con el fin de determinar las dificultades específicas y necesidades en torno a estas palabras, así como su papel en la interlengua de los alumnos españoles de inglés. Entre los principales objetivos está el de identificar si efectivamente estas palabras son difíciles para los estudiantes. En caso afirmativo, se pretende puntualizar aquellos falsos amigos que son más difíciles y las razones que llevan a los estudiantes a caer en la trampa de los falsos amigos. También se estudiará si estas palabras afectan a la intención comunicativa del hablante o si se trata simplemente de un problema de corrección lingüística. Finalmente, se determina si este estudio apunta a algunas necesidades pedagógicas importantes.

Los sujetos que intervienen en esta investigación han participado en el estudio de un modo indirecto a través de sus composiciones escritas y sus diálogos en los corpus analizados. En líneas generales y de acuerdo con los diseñadores de los corpus, todos ellos son estudiantes españoles con un nivel intermedio y avanzado. La mayor parte de ellos estudian filología en el momento de la recogida de datos en distintas universidades repartidas por toda la geografía española (Santiago de Compostela, Madrid y Murcia). El criterio que se ha empleado para la valoración del nivel de los estudiantes ha sido externo: el curso en el que están matriculados. No se les ha pasado ningún test

individual para evaluar su nivel de inglés de manera objetiva. De todos modos estos tres corpus han sido seleccionados por su comparabilidad (características muy similares).

La elaboración de este estudio se podría resumir de la siguiente manera. En un primer lugar, se hace una selección de falsos amigos de especial relevancia para los estudiantes basada en criterios de frecuencia. Para ello se han empleado dos listas de frecuencia y cinco fuentes bibliográficas específicas sobre los falsos amigos. Una vez seleccionados los ítems en función de su frecuencia de uso y las herramientas que nos permitirían llevar a cabo esta investigación, se procede a hacer una búsqueda en los corpus y a realizar un análisis exhaustivo de los datos obtenidos. A continuación, se exponen de manera breve los principales resultados de este primer estudio.

En cuanto al análisis cuantitativo, se han encontrado más de 3000 ejemplos de los 100 falsos amigos analizados en un total de 756.279 palabras. El 22 por ciento de los ejemplos encontrados presentan problemas o deficiencias en el uso de estas palabras. Si hacemos una comparación entre las distintas bases de datos, observamos que hay más cantidad de falsos amigos por cada 10.000 palabras en ICLE que en SULEC. Sin embargo, existen más dificultades en esta última base de datos. Esto se debe a que SULEC contiene textos escritos de estudiantes de nivel intermedio y avanzado mientras que ICLE sólo se compone de textos realizados por alumnos con un nivel avanzado. Si comparamos los datos de los corpus orales, obtenemos resultados similares puesto que se detectan más falsos amigos por 10.000 palabras en LINDSEI que en SULEC, pero se observan más dificultades con estas palabras en SULEC que en LINDSEI. En lo que respecta a la forma de expresión (oral o escrita) y al contrario de lo que cabría esperar, los datos indican que los alumnos cometen más errores con los falsos amigos en su expresión escrita. Todo parece indicar que esto se debe a la presencia de textos de alumnos con un nivel intermedio que hacen que la media de errores en este modo de expresión aumente y sobrepase el porcentaje medio de errores que se muestran en la expresión oral.

En relación al análisis cualitativo, vemos que ciertas palabras como *locals*, *molest*, *resume*, *plate* o *comprehensive* son mal utilizadas por los estudiantes. El sustantivo *career* presenta desafíos importantes y se usa principalmente en los mismos contextos que su homólogo español *carrera*. Por el contrario, términos como *parents*, *camp*, *blank* no presentan dificultades evidentes en la interlengua de los estudiantes. La tesis presenta en su interior un ranking de niveles de dificultad de los 100 falsos amigos estudiados

que podría ser interesante para alumnos, profesores, traductores y lingüistas varios (véase Gráfico 25; página 296).

Entre otras cosas, este primer estudio pretendía demostrar si los falsos amigos constituyen un problema real para los estudiantes o si los falsos amigos son sólo un mito inventado que no tiene importancia más allá del análisis contrastivo propuesto por Robert Lado. Los datos aportados por los corpus muestran que estas palabras son ciertamente problemáticas para los estudiantes españoles de inglés. En ocasiones, los alumnos utilizan estas palabras de un modo erróneo dando lugar a frases sin sentido. Los estudiantes tienden a cometer más errores cuando usan falsos amigos estilísticos que cuando usan falsos amigos totales, pero estos últimos son más problemáticos que los falsos amigos parciales. Sin embargo, los errores más graves son los que se cometen con el mal uso de los falsos amigos totales, ya que mientras que los fallos con los falsos amigos estilísticos podrían pasar desapercibidos, el mal uso de un falso amigo total siempre se advierte y, con frecuencia, provoca alguna reacción en el oyente (mala interpretación, sorpresa o desconcierto por no saber lo que en realidad quiere decir el hablante).

En cuanto a la frecuencia con la que los alumnos recurren a estas palabras, los datos indican que de cada 10.000 palabras hay 40 de los falsos amigos estudiados, es decir, un falso amigo por cada 250 palabras. Aunque el estudio básicamente evalúa el significado y el contexto en el que los alumnos utilizan estas palabras, se han encontrado fallos que no afectan sólo al aspecto semántico de la palabra sino también a las colocaciones (*announce a notice; attend to classes*).

Con respecto a las razones que conducen a los estudiantes al mal uso de estas palabras, todo indica que el origen de la mayoría de los problemas estriba en el efecto de la influencia interlingüística. La influencia de la lengua materna es evidente en muchos ejemplos (*actual, pretend*). Por otro lado, se observan algunos errores que pueden ser consecuencia de estrategias comunicativas que lleva a cabo el estudiante para resolver algunas dificultades que se le presentan a la hora de expresarse en inglés (ejemplo: uso de *molest* cuando el alumno quiere decir molestar que sería *disturb* en inglés).

En cuanto a la cuestión de si los falsos amigos constituyen un problema de corrección lingüística o pueden provocar malentendidos, se deduce de los resultados que el parecido de estas palabras entre el español y el inglés lleva a los estudiantes a cometer errores y, en ocasiones, estos errores podrían provocar situaciones incómodas, graciosas

o incluso problemas reales de comunicación, como, por ejemplo, cuando un alumno escribe en ICLE *miracles will be only a series of casualties*. Ejemplos como estos nos llevan a decir que los falsos amigos no sólo constituyen un problema de expresión sino que puede llevar a problemas en la comunicación de ciertos mensajes.

Se concluye también de este estudio que los profesores no deben hacer caso omiso de estas palabras en sus clases. Es importante que los alumnos estén familiarizados con estos vocablos para que no cometan errores de este tipo. Además se debe poner especial énfasis en los falsos amigos totales que pueden llevar a problemas de expresión graves y no se deben dejar de enseñar y recalcar estas palabras en niveles altos de competencia lingüística, ya que muchos alumnos con un nivel alto de inglés tienen problemas en el uso de estas palabras. Asimismo, el uso que los estudiantes hacen de estas palabras revela que a veces los alumnos conocen el significado de la palabra pero no saben los patrones típicos que la acompañan. De esto se hace patente la necesidad de una enseñanza en la que los profesores muestren el uso de estos lexemas mediante ejemplos ilustrativos y en la que se favorezcan asociaciones de palabras con situaciones claras y concretas potenciando así un buen aprendizaje de estos vocablos.

#### **CAPÍTULO 4. CONOCIMIENTO E INTERPRETACIÓN DE LOS FALSOS AMIGOS POR PARTE DE ESTUDIANTES ESPAÑOLES DE INGLÉS**

El estudio de corpus nos ha aportado datos sobre cuándo y cómo los estudiantes usan los falsos amigos en su expresión oral y escrita. Hemos visto que los alumnos carecen de un conocimiento amplio y detallado de estos lexemas y que el mal uso de ciertos falsos amigos puede llevar a malentendidos entre hablantes nativos y estudiantes de inglés. Sin embargo, el estudio realizado no nos aporta ninguna información sobre la interpretación que los estudiantes hacen de estas palabras cuando se las encuentran en la segunda lengua. Este segundo estudio intenta indagar en este tema a través de un cuestionario en el que los alumnos se enfrentan a una serie de actividades que incluyen falsos amigos. En él se presentan carteles reales que contienen palabras engañosas y se muestra un texto que incluye una gran cantidad de estas palabras con el fin de saber si los falsos amigos pueden llevar a la distorsión del significado de un texto y a la mala interpretación de un texto completo. Al igual que el estudio anterior, este segundo estudio está distribuido en ocho secciones diferentes: en la primera, se expone una breve justificación; en la segunda, se presentan los objetivos; en la tercera, cuarta y quinta se

abordan los participantes, los instrumentos de investigación y el procedimiento. Por último, en las secciones sexta, séptima y octava se exponen los datos, los resultados y las principales conclusiones.

Este segundo estudio parte de la premisa de que la similitud formal entre palabras inglesas y españolas podría llevar a los estudiantes españoles a malinterpretar ciertos mensajes en inglés. Para confirmar o refutar esta idea, se les pidió a los estudiantes su colaboración para rellenar un cuestionario de actividades y preguntas sobre el tema de los falsos amigos. Entre los objetivos de este cuestionario, están el de ver si los estudiantes reconocen los falsos amigos en inglés o si su interpretación está contaminada por sus conocimientos lingüísticos previos de la lengua materna. Para valorar la comprensión de estas palabras, los falsos amigos se presentan de diferentes formas y en diferentes contextos: de una manera aislada; en patrones y estructuras lingüísticas específicas; en oraciones; en un contexto situacional mediante carteles o en un texto que reproduce el lenguaje periodístico de una noticia. De esta forma se permite indagar en el conocimiento semántico y pragmático que los estudiantes poseen de estas palabras. Además de esto, a los alumnos se les formulan preguntas directas sobre el fenómeno de los falsos amigos. Así, se les cuestiona sobre su definición, sobre la importancia de estas palabras en el aula, sobre la cantidad de falsos amigos en inglés, sobre las técnicas que los profesores utilizan para enseñar estas palabras y sobre las estrategias que los estudiantes utilizan para aprender las mismas. También se les pregunta sobre la presencia de estas palabras en su libro de texto y sobre las dificultades que provocan estas palabras a nivel de comprensión y de expresión en inglés.

Como se ha descrito al principio de esta tesis, el foco de atención está puesto en la interlengua de estudiantes de inglés. Para desarrollar este segundo estudio, fue necesario reunir una cantidad considerable de estudiantes de niveles intermedio y avanzado que pudiesen contestar las actividades y preguntas formuladas en el cuestionario. Se han recogido muestras en bachillerato, escuelas de idiomas, centros de lenguas modernas y universidad. Profesores de estos niveles educativos han colaborado y han cedido media hora de sus clases para distribuir el cuestionario. Con respecto a las cifras concretas, es necesario decir que han participado 1027 estudiantes, de los cuales 688 son mujeres, 327 son hombres y 12 no especifican su sexo. Son alumnos adultos con una edad que supera los 16 años, el 58 por ciento de estos tienen un nivel intermedio y el 42 por ciento posee de un nivel intermedio alto a avanzado. En cuanto a la motivación, según

las respuestas, a estos sujetos les gusta el inglés y escuchan o leen cosas en esta lengua con frecuencia.

Como se ha señalado anteriormente, para llevar a cabo esta investigación se ha diseñado un cuestionario que se compone de dos partes bien diferenciadas. En la primera página, se explica que esta encuesta forma parte de una investigación pero no se especifica que trata de los falsos amigos para no condicionar las respuestas de los alumnos. Después de incluir una página donde se pide información personal sobre los estudiantes (nombre, sexo, educación, estancias en el extranjero y su motivación hacia el inglés), se muestra la primera parte del cuestionario que comienza con una actividad en la que los alumnos deben marcar la imagen que mejor ilustre el significado de la palabra que se presenta. Esta primera tarea tiene como objetivo dilucidar la interpretación y el concepto que ocho falsos amigos evocan en las mentes de los estudiantes españoles. Posteriormente se intenta indagar en el conocimiento semántico de cinco palabras para las cuales se proporciona una definición. Los estudiantes tienen que decir si la definición que se presenta es correcta o no. Más tarde, y con el propósito de examinar el conocimiento sintagmático de ciertos falsos amigos, se introduce una actividad que presenta diez falsos amigos en diversas colocaciones. Aquí los participantes deciden si estas colocaciones son adecuadas o no. Esto nos permite ver si los sujetos tienen un conocimiento semántico y sintagmático de ciertos falsos amigos. Posteriormente, se presentan cuatro parejas de palabras. Los alumnos tienen que elegir la palabra que mejor convenga de acuerdo con el contexto lingüístico proporcionado. Esto permite evaluar la discriminación de estas palabras en relación a un contexto lingüístico concreto. Una vez realizada esta actividad, se da un paso más y los alumnos tienen que completar una tarea de traducción. En esta, los participantes se enfrentan a determinados falsos amigos que aunque no son muy frecuentes en el aula de inglés si son comunes en los carteles de Gran Bretaña. Esta actividad nos permite saber si efectivamente el contexto ayuda a interpretar ciertos falsos amigos que en principio los alumnos desconocen. La primera parte del cuestionario finaliza con una tarea de comprensión lectora en la que los alumnos se tienen que enfrentar a un texto plagado de falsos amigos. Esta actividad permite extraer conclusiones sobre el papel de los falsos amigos en la comprensión de una noticia específica. Una vez realizadas estas seis actividades, los alumnos avanzan hacia una reflexión más consciente del tema de los falsos amigos. En la segunda parte del cuestionario, a los alumnos se les pregunta directamente si han oído hablar de los falsos amigos y si consideran que estas palabras



son importantes en el aula. También se les piden ejemplos, y se les pregunta sobre la presencia de estas palabras en el aula, cómo se aborda este tema y qué técnicas de estudio utilizan para recordar estas palabras. Finalmente, se les pide que reflexionen sobre las dificultades que podrían plantear estas palabras tanto a nivel de comprensión como a nivel de expresión y si sus libros de texto tienen secciones dedicadas a estas palabras.

Para dar una respuesta satisfactoria a las preguntas formuladas como objetivos de este estudio, se han seguido una serie de pasos que se resumen a continuación.

En un primer lugar, y después de delimitar el ámbito de estudio (interpretación de los falsos amigos), se hace una selección de cuarenta falsos amigos con el fin de reducir los ítems a una cantidad manejable y práctica y para no hacer un cuestionario aburrido y largo.

Después, se prepara, se pilota y se administra el cuestionario. Se formulan las actividades y las preguntas se ordenan de una manera lógica y progresiva de las más fáciles a las más difíciles y se pilota el cuestionario con una muestra pequeña de población (18 estudiantes de doctorado de la facultad de filología con diversos niveles de inglés) con el fin de ver si funciona y si se entienden las preguntas o no. Una vez hecho esto, se buscan profesores de distintas instituciones y se les propone a sus alumnos participar en esta investigación. Acto seguido, se registran las respuestas de los participantes en una base de datos. Se decide utilizar una hoja de datos de un programa de análisis estadístico avanzado denominado PASW (anteriormente SPSS). Se codifican las respuestas numéricamente y se introducen en una hoja de dicho programa para realizar un análisis simple de frecuencias. Por último, se hace el análisis de los datos y se examinan los resultados para extraer una serie de conclusiones relevantes.

Los resultados de esta investigación muestran que el índice de respuesta no es la misma para distintos falsos amigos. La palabra que los alumnos obvian de una manera más clara es el sustantivo *estate*. Por el contrario, términos como *casual*, *notice* o *embarrassed* registran un número alto de respuestas. Esto indica que los alumnos no están familiarizados o desconocen la palabra *estate* y que saben perfectamente o que están convencidos de cuál es el significado de un adjetivo como *embarrassed*. Esta idea se confirma cuando analizamos aquellos elementos léxicos que muestran un elevado número de interpretaciones erróneas. Entre las tres palabras más complicadas encontramos *estate* en tercera posición junto con *crime* y *eventual* que ocupan el primer y el segundo lugar del ranking. Se podría pensar que el tipo de actividad que se propone

puede también influir en cómo los alumnos responden o reaccionan ante distintas palabras. La actividad 5 en la que los alumnos tienen que ofrecer sus traducciones parece ser la más difícil y la que requiere un esfuerzo mayor por parte de los estudiantes; aunque la palabra *estate* se encuentra en esa actividad, las otras dos palabras que se nombran (*crime* y *eventual*) pertenecen a actividades aparentemente más fáciles y sin embargo, presentan un mayor número de errores.

Si hacemos un análisis de los resultados cualitativos en cada una de las actividades, observamos que los estudiantes establecen una relación de analogía entre ciertas palabras inglesas como *crime*, *inhabited*, *collar*, *lecture* y *conductor* y sus homólogos españoles en la primera actividad del cuestionario. Sin embargo, y de acuerdo con las respuestas de los estudiantes, esta asociación no es tan clara en otras palabras como *embarrassed*, *quiet* y *rope*. Los datos de la actividad 2 parecen ilustrar cómo los alumnos asignan el significado de los homógrafos españoles a palabras como *assist* o *casualty*. También se observan dificultades a la hora de distinguir las posibilidades combinatorias y los contextos de *accommodate*, *blank*, *commodities* y *fine* en la actividad 3. En la actividad 4, sorprende la incapacidad de establecer unos límites claros entre los contextos de uso de *career* y *eventual*. Por otro lado, en la actividad 5, los participantes tienden a traducir *estate agents* y *motorists* por “agentes del estado” y “motoristas”, lo que muestra un desconocimiento del significado real de estos dos falsos amigos y una clara influencia del español. En cuanto a la interpretación de los falsos amigos en una noticia, parece que los estudiantes no entienden ciertas palabras, como *suburb*, *molest* o *solicitor*, que son clave para una correcta interpretación del texto.

De todas formas, una visión general de los resultados de este segundo estudio indica que 65 por ciento de las respuestas muestra una interpretación acertada de los falsos amigos mientras que un 35 por ciento de dichas respuestas son erróneas, probablemente debido a la interferencia con el español.

Los resultados de este estudio demuestran que los estudiantes españoles no entienden el sentido de ciertos falsos amigos. También pone de manifiesto que no todos los falsos amigos que se incluyen en el cuestionario presentan el mismo grado de dificultad a la hora de su interpretación. Así, hay palabras que resultan bastante engañosas para los estudiantes (*assist*, *blank*, *casualty*, *crime*, *motorist* o *eventual*), mientras que otras no revisten grandes dificultades, como, por ejemplo *carpet*, *diversion*, *embarrassed*, *exit*, *large* o *mayor* (véase Gráfico 47; página 405).

En líneas generales, podemos decir que más del 30 por ciento de las respuestas muestran dificultades en la comprensión de ciertas palabras, mientras que el porcentaje restante revela una correcta interpretación de los elementos léxicos evaluados.

No es posible llegar a una conclusión tajante sobre cuáles son las causas de que unas palabras sean más fáciles para los estudiantes que otras. Sin embargo, el tipo de falso amigo y la clase de palabra influyen, sin duda, en la adquisición y comprensión de la misma. Así, se detectan menos errores en palabras cuya frecuencia es alta en inglés pero que presentan una frecuencia menor en español (*embarrassed*). Por otro lado, los falsos amigos totales y los sustantivos son más fáciles de identificar, comprender e interpretar que los falsos amigos parciales y que los adjetivos o adverbios.

En cuanto a las causas que explican la mala comprensión de estas palabras, el conocimiento insuficiente que los estudiantes tienen de estos lexemas y la excesiva confianza que ponen en su lengua materna parecen ser las razones que llevan a la mala interpretación de estas palabras.

Además de esto, hemos visto que los resultados indican que no todos los falsos amigos están al mismo nivel de adquisición. Mientras que unos parecen estar en el nivel 2 que se relaciona con el conocimiento sintagmático de las palabras (*camp*), la mayoría se encuentran en el nivel más básico de conocimiento que implica estar familiarizados con el componente semántico de la palabra (*mayor*). Los resultados también indican que no siempre un cotexto lingüístico específico ayuda a tomar decisiones correctas (*eventual, career*) y que la estrategia de adivinar el significado de las palabras en un contexto situacional funciona en algunas ocasiones (*diversion, large*), pero no en otras (*estate agents*).

Con respecto a la reflexión consciente de los estudiantes sobre los falsos amigos en la segunda parte del cuestionario, sus respuestas nos muestran que aunque la mayoría de ellos han oído hablar de los falsos amigos y consideran que es necesario aprender estas palabras en sus clases de inglés, sus libros de texto y los profesores no se detienen mucho en explicar este fenómeno. Ahora bien cuando lo hacen, emplean definiciones y proporcionan ejemplos ilustrativos de uso.

## CAPÍTULO 5

### CONCLUSIONES, IMPLICACIONES Y CUESTIONES PARA EL FUTURO

Ambos estudios muestran que los falsos amigos son problemáticos para los estudiantes españoles de inglés a nivel de expresión y de comprensión. De hecho, existen hallazgos claros de que los alumnos usan estas palabras en contextos inadecuados (*Smokers must be more comprehensive*) que pueden llevar a situaciones comunicativas fallidas, y que a nivel de comprensión, los estudiantes toman como punto de referencia su lengua materna a la hora de interpretar los falsos amigos, especialmente cuando estos no tienen un conocimiento profundo de estas palabras (*assist* se interpreta como asistir y *crime* se asocia con la palabra española crimen).

Los resultados también demuestran que hay distintos grados de dificultad en los 100 falsos amigos analizados. Hay ciertas palabras que no presentan muchas complicaciones, entre ellas *success*, *carpet* o *rope*. No obstante, otras palabras suponen grandes dificultades a la hora de su interpretación y uso (*commodity*, *locals*, *inhabited* o *assist*). Los datos también revelan que algunas palabras plantean más dificultades en términos de comprensión que de uso (e.g. *college*, *crime* or *fine*) y que otras plantean más problemas en su uso que en su interpretación (*large*, *pipe* o *sensible*).

Vemos que en ambos estudios los porcentajes de respuestas y uso correctos son más elevados que las cifras relativas al mal uso y mala interpretación de estos elementos léxicos. Si comparamos el porcentaje de imprecisiones, observamos que son mayores en las tareas de comprensión que de producción (22 por ciento en producción y 35 por ciento en la interpretación). La naturaleza de las palabras que ahí se incluyen (*solicitor*, *preservative*, *diversion* or *casualty*) podrían explicar este resultado.

Otro resultado sorprendente es que el porcentaje de error es mayor en la expresión escrita que en la oral. Esto encuentra una explicación plausible en el nivel de los alumnos. En el análisis de la expresión oral, se tienen en cuenta exclusivamente los diálogos de personas con un nivel avanzado de inglés mientras que en la parte escrita se analizan composiciones realizadas por estudiantes de nivel intermedio. Lo que sí ambos estudios demuestran que los falsos amigos están presentes en niveles avanzados de competencia lingüística y que hay errores a estos niveles. Esto concuerda con las observaciones apuntadas por Laufer (1990), Mattheoudakis (1998), Dijkstra et al. (1998) o Fischer y Lavric (2003).

Los resultados de ambos estudios indican que el tipo de falso amigo influye en la cantidad de errores que se producen. Los falsos amigos totales son más problemáticos a nivel de producción mientras que los falsos amigos parciales presentan mayores dificultades a nivel de comprensión. Esto tiene cierta lógica porque a nivel de expresión un falso amigo parcial tiene posibilidades de ser bien utilizado (hay significados que coinciden entre la lengua materna y el inglés), mientras que a nivel de comprensión los falsos amigos parciales son confusos y al no tener un significado constante en todos los casos, el alumno no sabe cuándo le tiene que asignar un significado u otro. Esto podría relacionarse con las dificultades que presenta el aprendizaje de las palabras polisémicas frente a las palabras monosémicas. Las palabras polisémicas que estarían representadas en este caso por los falsos amigos parciales resultan más difíciles que las palabras de una naturaleza más bien monosémica que estarían ilustradas por los falsos amigos totales.

En general, también podemos ver que la frecuencia con la que se usan y se enseñan estas palabras es fundamental. Aquellas palabras que son recurrentes en el aula de inglés son bien usadas e interpretadas (*parents* y *embarrassed*) por los estudiantes en ambos estudios.

Los problemas con los falsos amigos afectan tanto a la corrección lingüística como a la intención comunicativa (e.g. *she is an actual woman; our actual government is trying to modify the law*). A nivel de comprensión, interpretar de manera errónea un falso amigo podría resultar en una mala interpretación del mensaje (*follow diversion or contains no preservatives*) y en una adquisición defectuosa de la palabra.

De todos modos, los dos estudios de esta tesis contribuyen a apoyar las afirmaciones ya señaladas por expertos como Palmberg (1987), Laufer (1989) y Verspoor (2008), que sostienen que los falsos amigos son un problema a nivel de expresión y comprensión.

Nuestros resultados apuntan a que la lengua materna tiene una gran influencia a la hora de identificar, reconocer e interpretar los falsos amigos en inglés (*motorist, solicitor, collar, conductor, preservative and diversion*) y a la hora de utilizar ciertos vocablos (*career, resume, plate o comprehensive*). Parece también que hay ciertos aspectos cognitivos de procesamiento y almacenamiento implicados. Tenemos, por ejemplo, lo que comúnmente se denomina como «psicotipología lingüística» (Kellerman, 1983), que favorece la interconexión entre estas dos lenguas, y ciertas estrategias que el estudiante adopta para rellenar ciertas lagunas en el conocimiento de

la lengua inglesa para mantener la comunicación (Tarone, 1981). Además de esto, el solapamiento formal de los falsos amigos en las dos lenguas favorece la influencia mutua de ambas lenguas y la existencia de verdaderos amigos o palabras cognadas que coinciden en su forma y en su significado llevan a los estudiantes a generalizar este hecho y a aplicar el significado de su homólogo en la lengua materna a palabras engañosas de la L2. Estos factores, unidos al conocimiento superficial que los estudiantes tienen de los falsos amigos, son determinantes para el mal uso e interpretación de estas palabras. Además de esto, ciertas técnicas que utilizan los profesores (simplificación, énfasis en los cognados) y la escasa exposición al inglés no favorecen la correcta adquisición de estos términos.

En cuanto a las implicaciones pedagógicas, esta tesis pone en evidencia la necesidad de enseñar y aprender los falsos amigos de una manera consciente. Esto supone exponer al alumno a un input adecuado, y enfatizar el uso de estas palabras desde las fases iniciales del aprendizaje del inglés. Es importante un aprendizaje explícito de estas palabras que se pueden enseñar aplicando diversas técnicas de enseñanza, como ejemplos ilustrativos o uso de material audiovisual. Es importante también enseñar estas palabras y revisarlas a través de distintas etapas del sistema educativo con el fin de adquirirlas de un modo correcto.

Por último, cabe señalar que el estudio de los falsos amigos no debería finalizar aquí con esta tesis, puesto que todavía quedan diversas áreas interesantes por investigar. Convendría tener este estudio como referencia para aplicar una metodología similar en otras lenguas y analizar si se encuentran resultados parecidos. Además, sería interesante hacer una investigación más profunda del uso de estas palabras en la expresión oral de los estudiantes de distintos niveles.

Este estudio se ha limitado a examinar la comprensión lectora de los falsos amigos. También sería de utilidad ver si se detectan los mismos problemas a nivel de comprensión oral. Sería igualmente interesante explorar los materiales didácticos que se utilizan en el aula y las técnicas de enseñanza que se emplean para abordar este tema, así como su eficacia con distintos tipos de estudiantes. Por último, también se podría intentar hacer un análisis longitudinal para ver la evolución del uso de estas palabras en diferentes estadios de la adquisición de la lengua extranjera.